

Benefits of Cherries in Cancer Prevention

Cherry Research Update American Institute for Cancer Research

The benefits of tart cherries, with their high levels of anthocyanins, perillyl alcohol and melatonin, recently caught the attention of the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR), based in Washington D. C. Because the natural substances found in cherries have been shown to fight cancer both individually and in concert, the AICR has begun to fund additional research on the ability of cherries to work as anti-carcinogens. The AICR recently funded two research projects both with the intent to identify the cancer-fighting potential of perillyl alcohol and certain anthocyanins.

Cleveland Clinic - Taussig Cancer Center

The Taussig Cancer Center, which is affiliated with the Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio, has just begun Phase I of a study on the effects of perillyl alcohol for individuals with a known history of cancer. The study will test healthy women with a history of breast cancer, which has not recurred.

Perillyl alcohol (POH) and similar compounds (called limonenes) are used as food additives and are found naturally in fruits, particularly tart cherries. **There is some evidence that compounds of this class can inhibit the growth of certain cancers and pre-cancerous lesions, perhaps by helping the body to get rid of potentially cancer-causing chemicals or by interfering with signals that cause cells to divide rapidly.** The aim of the study is to determine what level of POH should be used in future studies to assess whether this compound is useful in preventing cancer.

Michigan State University - Heterocyclic Aromatic Amines

Researchers at Michigan State University have begun to analyze the antioxidant compounds in tart cherries to determine their effect on heterocyclic aromatic amine formation (HAA) when added to meat. The formation of HAA's can be carcinogenic or mutagenic and therefore, researchers continue to look for ways to inhibit their development. Similar experiments investigating the effects of organosulfur compounds found in garlic demonstrated some success in reducing HAA formation in cooked beef patties.

David Ropa, a consultant with Thomas J. Payne Market Development, wrote the story about Dr. Reiter and compiled the information on the most recent research projects being conducted on cherries.