

## **U of MN researchers find regular use of aspirin may lower risk of adult leukemia**

**MINNEAPOLIS / ST. PAUL--**Researchers from the Cancer Center at the University of Minnesota have found that adult women taking aspirin two or more times a week may lower their risk of adult leukemia by more than 50 percent. The study will be published in the June 13 edition of *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*, a journal of the American Association for Cancer Research.

Led by Julie Ross, Ph.D., associate professor of pediatrics and a member of The Cancer Center, researchers analyzed data from the Iowa Women's Health Study to determine whether taking aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen could protect against the leukemia. Since 1985, the Iowa Women's Health Study has followed more than 41,000 post-menopausal women, tracking their overall health, lifestyle, behaviors, and incidence of cancer. For this particular investigation, 28,224 women from that group were included in the study.

"There's a growing body of evidence that aspirin may be a powerful cancer-preventing agent," said Ross. "To our knowledge, this is the first prospective study to examine the association between NSAID use and adult leukemia."

Adult leukemia accounts for nearly 5 percent of all newly diagnosed cancers in the United States. Currently, little is known about what causes leukemia in adults or possible prevention strategies.

Through their research, Ross and her team found that women who developed leukemia took aspirin significantly less often than women who did not develop leukemia. They also found that aspirin appears to have a more potent protective effect for adult leukemia than non-aspirin NSAIDs.

Ross noted that several previous studies in this area have grouped aspirin and non-aspirin NSAIDs together. "A strength of our study was the ability to examine separately the effects of aspirin and non-aspirin NSAIDs," she said. "While the results are preliminary, notable differences in leukemia risk between aspirin and non-aspirin NSAID use definitely call for additional research with other large populations."

Although aspirin is generally a safe drug, it can have adverse effects for some individuals. Before people embark on an aspirin regimen, they should check with their doctor.

Co-authors of this study are Christine Kasum, M.P.H., Cindy Blair, B.S. and Aaron Folsom, M.D., M.P.H.

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