

Cancer drugs

Many drugs are identified while looking for those that are specifically toxic to cancer cells. However, very few of these drugs go beyond clinical trials; why is that so has been a mystery. A group of researchers has investigated this mystery. The first experiment involved the MELK protein, considered essential for the growth of various tumors against which specific drugs had presumably been identified. To test whether the target of these drugs was actually the *MELK* gene, they specifically inactivated it with CRISPR-Cas9. Surprise! The cells did not respond at all. The researchers then inactivated, again with CRISPR-Cas9, the presumed target genes of other anticancer drugs with mostly the same result. Conclusion: the target gene, often identified with iRNA (RNA-interference), is not the presumed one. New pharmacological strategies need to be thought of.

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