

Spotlight

By Gina Kirchweger

Fighting Cancer with Aspirin

Dhillon *et al.*

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A recent study, which tracked a group of 25,570 patients, some of whom were randomly assigned to take a daily aspirin to prevent heart attacks or vascular disease, found that those taking aspirin regularly had a 21% lower risk of dying from cancer than those not taking the drug. Benefits were seen after taking aspirin for 5 years for esophageal, pancreatic, brain and lung cancer. In this issue, a prospective cohort study following twice as many patients over 18 years adds prostate cancer to the growing list of cancers positively affected by regular doses of aspirin.

When Dhillon *et al.* evaluated long-term aspirin use and the incidence of total, high-grade and lethal prostate cancer in 51,520 patients, they observed a 10% reduced risk of prostate cancer associated with the consumption of at least two adult-strength aspirin tablets per week that was further reduced in men over the age of 65 years (15%). The authors also found significant decreases in high-grade (28%) and lethal (29%) prostate cancer risk with dose-response associations for number of tablets per week.

Although a recent international consensus statement stated that aspirin has the potential for chemoprevention, the decision to take aspirin solely to reduce the risk of cancer needs to weigh the risks against the benefits since the regular use of aspirin can have serious side effects, including stomach bleeding and irritation.