

New Hope for Type 1 Diabetes Cure

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Description

In a 2008 study, scientists have cured Type 1 diabetes in lab mice using drugs already on the market to treat cancer. As NBC's Robert Bazell reports, the development could have enormous implications for the more than one million diabetics in the U.S.

Keywords

Diabetes, Juvenile, Type 1, Treatment, Cure, Mice, Lab, Laboratory, Cancer, Drugs, Autoimmune, Disease, Gleevec, Sutent

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Transcript

Potential Cure for Type I Diabetes

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:

A potential--potential--treatment for type one diabetes. It involves two drugs already on the market used to treat some cancers. Now, we should say clearly and at the outset this is a study of mice, but it's generating excitement because it could hold the key to putting diabetes patients into a kind of permanent remission. We get an explanation of the story from our chief science correspondent Robert Bazell.

ROBERT BAZELL reporting:

The experiment so far has been only in mice, but the results have been exciting. With drugs already on the markets to treat cancer, scientists have cured type 1 diabetes.

Dr. JEFFREY BLUESTONE (UCSF Diabetes Center Immunobiologist): Using drugs that are already approved has the ability, potentially, to more rapidly move from the bench side into the clinic, and that was a real motivation for us in doing the studies in the first place.

BAZELL: If the drugs work safely in people, it could be great news for the one million Americans, including Sophie Elder, who suffer from type 1, also called juvenile diabetes. Unlike type 2, which can be related to obesity, type 1 is an autoimmune disease where the body's disease-fighting system goes haywire and attacks the cells that make insulin. One drug was Gleevec, a pill with few side effects that has been very successful against certain kinds of leukemia and other cancers. The other was a similar pill called Sutent.

Dr. BLUESTONE: We didn't have to treat continuously, that we could treat for a limited period of time, a couple of months, and then stop the treatment and the animals didn't revert to become diabetic again.

TEXT:

For more on: Diabetes Research nightly.msnbc.com

BAZELL: Sophie's mom, Suzanne, has heard reports of possible cures in animals before so she remains skeptical, but hopeful for her daughter's future.

Ms. SUZANNE ELDER (Sophie's Mother): She has this ongoing, ever-evolving sort of fantasy party, you

know, that we're going to throw the day of the--the day she's cured. And it involves a lot of chocolate. It also involves a very large tent and Johnny Depp.

BAZELL: The scientists say they could have meaningful results about the drugs' ability to treat diabetes in human within a year. Robert Bazell, NBC News, New York.