

# New studies test cranberry's ability to halt tumor growth

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DARTMOUTH — Can cranberries prevent colon cancer?

That's the question a team of UMass Dartmouth researchers hope to answer with a series of studies beginning later this summer.

"We think there are several compounds in the fruit that can treat cancer," Cathy Neto, a biochemistry professor at UMass Dartmouth, said Wednesday. "We're trying to build a body of evidence. ... We know they slow things down."

In the past, scientists found blackberries have a positive effect on esophageal cancer, according to the UMass Dartmouth-led Cranberry Health Research Center. The center, which is funding the new studies with a pair of \$25,000 grants, hopes to find the same is true for cranberries and colon cancer.

Preliminary lab research showed that anti-oxidants in cranberries inhibited cancer cell growth, but that proved little in regards to humans or animals, said UMass Dartmouth bioengineering professor Tracie Ferreira, a partner in one of the studies.

"The cells were out of the context of a whole body," she said. "Does it just work against cells in a dish?"

Scientists plan to go beyond the petri dish by testing cranberry extract on zebra fish and mice suffering from colon cancer. Successful animal trials will lead to human ones.

"Starting with this animal study (this summer), it could be maybe five years until human ones," Neto said. "(A fish) is not quite a mammal, but this can give us some useful information."

Human or not, the research can show how the extract interacts with a living, breathing body. But even under the most optimistic scenarios, researchers see the chemicals in the fruit preventing cancer, not destroying it.

"You might have five cancer cells and those five get killed by this extract before they become cancer," Ferreira said. "My hope is that we find that this is a preventative."