

India-made turmeric extract gives UK cancer patient new lease of life

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A woman's deadly blood cancer was stopped in its tracks when she began taking a daily dose of an Indian-made compound based on turmeric, prompting experts to call for further research.



Dieneke Ferguson, 67, has stunned doctors by halting the cancer in its tracks with the wonder curry spice turmeric. She is leading a normal life more than a decade after being diagnosed with deadly myeloma.

Ferguson had myeloma diagnosed more than a decade ago. Her illness has an average survival of just over five years - making it one of the most fatal forms of the disease. It was rapidly spreading - causing increasing back pain - and she had already had a second relapse.

Treatment with chemotherapy and stem cells failed and she faced a third relapse. After research online she began taking 8 grams of curcumin, one of the main compounds in turmeric, each day in a tablet made by Indian company Sabinsa,

costing £50 every 10 days.



Doctors said that, despite having no further treatment, her condition had remained stable for the last five years. Her case was published in BMJ Case Reports.

Dr Abbas Zaidi, a haematologist at Barts NHS Health Trust, said, "Here we describe a myeloma patient who started a daily dietary supplement of curcumin when approaching her third relapse.

"In the absence of further antimyeloma treatment the patient plateaued and has remained stable for the last five years with good quality of life."

The remarkable improvement described in BMJ Case Reports follows previous research into the health benefits of turmeric, which is packed with antioxidants.

In India, the benefits of turmeric have long been recognised by traditional systems of medicine and are known to every homemaker. But as kitchen turmeric contains two per cent curcumin it would be physically impossible to eat enough to get the same dose.

In the West, since the turn of the century more than 50 clinical trials have tested curcumin - the pigment in turmeric that gives it that bright yellow colour. These suggest the spice can protect against lung disease, myeloma, cancers of the pancreas, colon and breast as well as Alzheimer's, heart disease and depression.

It has also been shown to help speed recovery after surgery and effectively treat arthritis.

Writing in BMJ Case Reports, Dr Zaidi said, "Curcumin is a polyphenol derived from the perennial herb turmeric and has - for centuries - been used as a traditional Indian medicine.

"Several reports published over the two decades have claimed various health benefits of curcumin and this has led to its increasing popularity as a dietary supplement to prevent or treat a number of different diseases.

"The biological activity of curcumin is indeed remarkable."

It produces multiple effects through its "natural antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic and analgesic properties."

Dr Zaidi added, "Here, we present a case of a heavily pretreated relapsing myeloma patient who, in the absence of further treatment options at the time, started daily curcumin and has since remained stable for the past five years."

Dieneke continues to take curcumin without further anti-myeloma treatment and her cancer cell count is negligible.

Dr Zaidi said, "Over the last 60 months, her myeloma has remained stable with minimal fluctuation in paraprotein level, her blood counts lie within the normal range and she has maintained good quality of life throughout this period."

Dieneke, who lives in north London, first came across the potential remedy on the internet and decided to try it as a last resort.

Myeloma occurs when the white blood cells produced in the bone marrow multiply uncontrollably and stop producing the normal antibodies needed to fight infection. The process causes bone damage, intense pain, fatigue and nerve damage.

Dieneke uses a product from Sabinsa made from three forms of curcumin molecules and which has been recommended by patient forums.

The tablets are relatively expensive even by UK standards, but provide a form of curcumin that's better absorbed by the body.

*** Disclaimer – Sami-Sabinsa's products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.**