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ASIA EDITION

Singapore study indentifies new type of lymphoma

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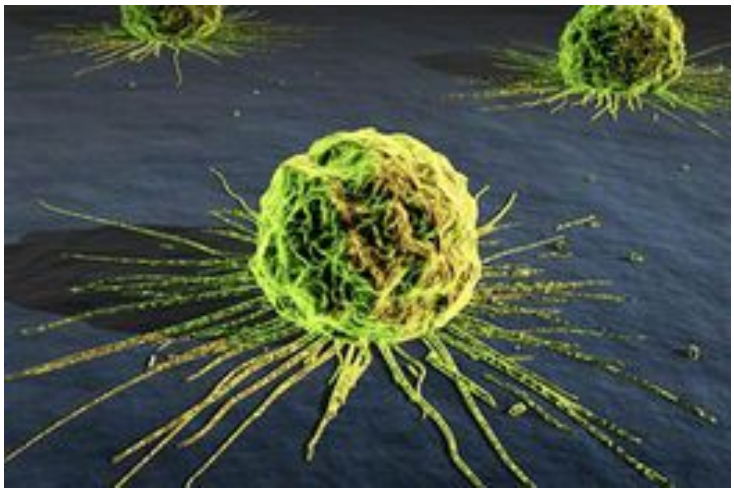

Singapore: Researchers at the lymphoma study group at Singapore General Hospital (SGH) and the National Cancer Center of Singapore (NCCS) have identified a new type of deadly intestinal lymphoma, which is particularly common in Asia. The scientists, who were led by clinicians from the SingHealth Academic Healthcare Cluster, also developed a new diagnostic test to accurately identify patients. The discovery is expected to effect the most recent WHO classification of haematolymphoid neoplasms.

In addition, the team has identified a novel biomarker, known as MATK (megakaryocyte-associated tyrosine kinase), and developed a diagnostic test that enables clinicians to accurately diagnose patients suffering from this type of lymphoma.

The study involved 60 cases from centres in Singapore and from South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Australia, China and Malaysia. The disease, which was almost unheard of before 2008, has been classified as an alternative type of enteropathy-associated T-cell lymphoma (EATL Type I). The study has been published online in Leukemia.

Associate professor, Tan Soo Yong, senior consultant, department of pathology at SGH, and first author of the study, said that, "We discovered that the intestinal lymphoma commonly seen in Asian patients has no links to coeliac disease or EATL Type I found in Caucasians. Instead, we discovered that the pathology of this disease is very different and most likely originates from a unique epithelial cell type found in the intestine, making it a completely different disease type. We, therefore, propose to re-classify the disease, currently labelled EATL Type II, as 'Epitheliotropic Intestinal T-cell Lymphoma' (EITL)." Dr Tan is also director of the SingHealth Tissue Repository and a faculty at Duke-NUS.

The researchers now plan to collaborate with international experts in the US and Canada to investigate the cell of origin and explore immunological approaches to block its growth. The research was funded by the National Medical Research Council (NMRC) of Singapore, SingHealth Foundation, and the HSBC Trustee Singapore as trustees of the Major John Long trust fund and the Chew Woon Poh trust fund.