

HIV/AIDS, Cancer? Could Jamaica Have The Cure?

The Jamaican ball moss. Could that be the secret to a cure for AIDS and Cancer? Two years after Jamaica's announcement of the anti-cancer and anti-HIV/AIDS properties of the plant, the US patent office has given preliminary approval to the research.

The research carried out by president of the Environmental Health Fund (EHF), Dr. Henry Lowe, and his American research partner, Dr. Joseph Bryant, indicates that the plant's extract may be able to cure cancer and HIV/AIDS.

According to the Jamaica Observer, Lowe has conducted tests on tumours grown on rats, and has found that the moss ball extract is more potent than the world's current leading anti-cancer drug, Taxol. The extract also has fewer side effects. In like manner, Bryant conducted tests at the University of Maryland Institute of Human Virology, where they found that the extract also has anti-HIV properties.

The 'Rat-Race'

With all of this good news, and with prospects for success looking very bright indeed, Lowe now faces the problem of staying ahead of the competition. Since the publication of the name of the plant from which this miraculous extract is taken, and with the publication of the patent, Lowe worries that the plant can now be used by competition to produce a commercial version of this drug before he does. This could result in another nation/company benefiting from Lowe's groundbreaking work. This has happened before with the periwinkle plant.

The plant was used locally for years to treat diabetes. When local work spread to Canada, another company proceeded to make what is now the world's leading leukemia drugs (Vinblastine and Vincristine), from which Jamaica did not gain financially. Recalling history, Lowe stressed the urgency of beating the competition to a commercial drug. "It makes sense for you to take it to a stage where you have a say in its future, which makes it crucial to have the resources to take it to that level," Lowe was quoted as saying. While he is not certain when the drug could become commercial, he hopes that he will be able to use to Jamaica's benefit.

Future Looking Brighter

Lowe is already known in Jamaica for his studies into the medicinal properties of Jamaican plants. He has partnered with University of Technology president, Errol Morrison, to create a resource area where ongoing research into the medicinal potentials of Jamaican plants can be conducted. He has also been invited to present his work at the 100th Anniversary celebration of Paul Ehrlich's reception of the Nobel Prize. Ehrlich was a German chemist hailed as 'the father of immunology' who received the 1908 Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine for his work on immunity. He also coined the phrase 'chemotherapy' and popularised the concept of the 'magic bullets', which are compounds that selectively target specific disease-causing organisms.

The application of this theory led to the creation of monoclonal antibodies, which in turn revolutionised how medicines were created, and greatly increased their effectiveness. Lowe hopes that the Jamaican moss ball will play a similar role for this nation, and create history and a sustainable source of income for the island. Source: Jamaica Observer (See full article at www.jamaicaobserver.com)