NUS team claims advance in skin cancer treatment

Medical school researchers develop molecule that can 'kill' melanoma skin cancer cells

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Researchers at the National University of Singapore's Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine say they have developed a molecule that can 'kill' melanoma skin cancer cells.

The novel compound is said to control the growth of cancer cells by activating a 'death switch', starting a process which causes the cells to self-destruct.

The molecule's potential for treating melanoma skin cancer was discovered by Professor Carlos Bianco, a senior in the Department of Physiology at NUS Medicine.

Skin cancers are divided into two kinds: melanoma and non-melanoma. The incidence of non-melanoma skin cancer has risen over the past decades, with about 132,000 cases occurring globally every year.

Melanoma skin cancers are extremely deadly. The cancer first manifests as a mole-like lesion on the skin, growing progressively as it invades the body's tissues and organ systems.

There is no definitive cure for skin cancer.

Prof Bianco told the media in an interview that treatment options for melanoma skin cancer are limited, with a 50 per cent survival rate only.

The use of the molecule to activate the "death receptor" of melanoma skin cancer cells, he said, presents an option for a new treatment method for melanoma.