



Wild mushroom can fight prostate cancer: Israeli researchers

JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli scientists claim that a wild mushroom, used in traditional Chinese medicine for a century, could treat prostate cancer, the University of Haifa said Friday.

Researchers at the university in northern Israel said they found molecules in the *Ganoderma lucidum* mushroom, commonly known as the reishi, which help suppress some mechanisms involved in the progression of prostate cancer.

"We already knew the mushroom could impede the development of cancer by affecting the immune system. The in-vitro trials we have done show that it attacks the cancer cells directly," chief researcher Ben Zion Zaidman told AFP.

"These results give rise to hope about developing medication to treat prostate cancer," he said of research carried out to date only in Petri dishes. The research still has to be tested on animals.

The reishi is found only in remote, wild areas, preferring a habitat of rotting plum tree trunks, sometimes oak trees, in heavily forested mountain areas.

The Chinese have tried to grow reishi mushrooms for centuries, but it was only in the early 1970s that Japanese experts managed to cultivate them.

Prostate cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer among men, with more than 543,000 cases diagnosed worldwide each year.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announced in October that he is suffering from prostate cancer and is expected to undergo surgery in the new year.

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