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Study to Determine if Honey Prevents Radiation Therapy Mouth Sores



Research on Manuka Honey Effect on Ulcers

Aim to Reduce Oral Problems in Cancer Patients

By Elspeth Mclean, [Otago Daily Times](#) (New Zealand), 12/11/2008

"A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down," so the song goes, but for some Dunedin cancer patients next year, three spoonfuls of honey a day will be part of the medicine.

They will be taking part in research to determine if Manuka honey can ease the effects of radiation therapy.

The study, based on a two-year randomised trial, will involve 120 patients in Dunedin, Wellington and Palmerston North who are receiving radiation therapy for head and neck cancers.

Principal investigator, University of Otago senior lecturer in the [department of radiation therapy](#) (Wellington) [Dr Patrix Herst](#) said mouth ulcers were a common side-effect from radiation treatment.


She knew of cases where patients could not speak or eat because their mouths were so painful. Patients could lose much weight in a six-week treatment and the ulcers could lead to infection and gum disease. Cancer patients already had enough grief in their lives and "they don't need this".

It was hoped that by swirling 20ml of honey around to coat the inside of patients' mouths three times a day _ before treatment, immediately after and six hours later _ ulceration might be avoided.

Small overseas trials in Malaysia, Iran and Egypt had pointed to the benefits of such treatment.

For the larger New Zealand trial, Dr Herst had chosen to use Manuka honey because it had been shown to have antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties.

Special, medical-grade sterilised Comvita Manuka honey would be used to ensure the honey was toxin-free...

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