Converting mesenchymal cells to epithelial cells reduces risk of ovarian cancer metastasis.

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Ovarian cancer is the most fatal gynecological cancer, in part because when the cancer is detected, the malignant cells have frequently already spread (metastasized) to other parts of the body, . Researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology, however, have discovered that members of the miR200 family of microRNAs may be able to convert the highly metastatic cancer cells into a form that is less likely to spread.

During the development of ovarian cancer normal epithelial cells convert into a more 'primitive' mesenchymal state. Epithelial cells are more adhesive than the former and are generally less likely to spread. Peripheral tumor cells often convert into mesenchymal cells immediately before metastasis, which allows them to detach from the tumor. The capacity of miR200 microRNAs to convert mesenchymal ovarian cancer cells back into epithelial cancer cells offers hope at bettering the survival rate of patients with ovarian cancer.

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