Malaria drug slows pancreatic cancer growth in mouse models.

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When pancreatic cancer cells to grow, they require the break down of cellular organelles and macromolecules via a process called autophagy. Targeting this process may offer an additional approach to improving the treatment of pancreatic cancer. When autophagy is inhibited, the body produces more reactive oxygen species (ROS), and these result in increased DNA damage. ROS cause cells to be targeted for destruction, and in mouse models, inhibition of autophagy has resulted in tumor growth regression and an increased survival rate. Interestingly, the malaria drug chloroquine has proven to be an effective autophagy inhibitor, and since the drug has already been in use for many years, it may be easier to use the drug as an anti-cancer therapy.

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