A Cancer:Obesity Connection - Cancer Killing Cells 'Paralyzed' By Fat

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Many kinds of cancer are found more commonly in people who are obese. The reasons for this are not completely understood. A new study from the Trinity College Dublin sheds more light on the problem.

Cancer cells can be recognized and killed by immune cells called, quite appropriately, natural killer (NK) cells. These cells produce proteins that enter and attack cancer cells. In obese people, the NK cells contain too much fat. The fat seems to interfere with the way the NK cells produce energy and prevents them from killing cancer cells.

The researchers also found that the NK cells could be re-programmed to become cancer killers again. The research connects obesity and cancer and also shows a possible way to overcome the negative effects of obesity on these cells.

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