

After Edmond man says dog dewormer cured his cancer, researchers look into others using the treatment

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By Jericka Handie Tulsa World

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"The Hardesty family set out to make a difference in the lives of all Oklahomans and give back to the state they call home," Dr. Stephen Prescott, OMRF president, said. COURTESY/Brett Deering

By Jericka Handie Tulsa World

Correction: This story misstated the name of the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation president. The story has been corrected.

After an Edmond man claimed a dewormer medication meant for dogs cured him of small-cell lung cancer, some cancer researchers now want to learn more about the mysterious drug that is piquing patient interest.

Joe Tippens was only given three months to live. But doctors later enrolled him in a clinical trial they hoped could give him more time.

Tippens said he received a tip from a veterinarian who suggested he try a dog dewormer drug called fenbendazole, which was believed to display cancer-fighting properties, according to cell studies.

In his blog, Tippens wrote that after receiving his fourth cancer-free diagnosis at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston last April, the results indicated that his cancer was gone after two years of treatment.

Dr. Stephen Prescott, Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation president, said Tippens' story interested him after speaking to a scientist at Johns Hopkins University who conducted a case study where scientists implanted immune-deficient mice with human tumors.

While the experiment was still in progress, a veterinarian at Johns Hopkins University put the mice on the same deworming medications that Tippens used.

After examining the results, scientists found that the implanted tumors would not grow, he said.

"They were trying to make cancer in mice and unbeknownst to them, something that the veterinarian in the facility had done prevented that," Prescott said.

Shortly after, Prescott said he met Tippens through mutual friends.

While director of the Huntsman Cancer Institute in Salt Lake City, Prescott said he "would hear stories all the time about new approaches to cancer medical treatments," but remained skeptical.

However, Prescott said he and a team Tippens is putting together will collaborate to explore alternative care methods.

"It would be a wonderful thing if we discovered that there is this compound that has broad activity with dramatic responses like with Mr. Tippens, what a great thing that would be," he said.

Prescott said they plan to spend six to 12 months researching the medical records of cancer patients.

In their study, they will consider specifics such as the treatment they received, how they reacted and how long they were given to live.

By studying Tippens' case further, Prescott said they could provide more truth to the dog dewormer medicinal impact.

One problem made evident by some anticancer medications is that over time they become ineffective, he said.

It is the reason why patients today are seeking other treatments.

Most anticancer drugs attack a specific target on or in the cancer cell, he explained.

“What often happens is that it works initially and then quits working,” Prescott said.

“And the reason is the cancer has continued to change and have additional mutations, so what was the initial targets no longer respond to the drug.”

Part of Tippens’ treatment regimen was CBD.

Chip Paul, the founder of Owasso-based GnuPharma, a company that specializes in developing natural products, said he is unsure how influential CBD alone was on Tippens’ cancer cells.

“If he was just taking cannabidiol, it is doubtful that it affected his cancer because it does not have the right actives in it to be able to signal that,” Paul said.

Prescott said as the clinical trial develops, he hopes that it will eventually lead to answers regarding Tippens’ shocking recovery.

“I do really applaud Mr. Tippens for his forthrightness and aggressive stance for something he believes has helped him and can help us as a people,” Prescott said.

“He has done more than any patient has done in that regard.”

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