

Peptides may reduce illness

By SUSIE WILLIAMS

Certain enzymes in humans may be partially responsible for turning normal cells into cancerous cells, said Dr. George I. Glover, a research chemist at Texas A&M University.

He said these enzymes are also factors in high blood pressure, blood clotting, inflammations such as arthritis and many other important body functions.

Glover heads a team of A&M chemists working on chemical devices to block these enzymes. He is assisted by David Breeden and Wu-Schyong Liu, graduate assistants, and Kristine Kelley, a senior biochemistry major.

The enzymes, called proteases, were first recognized in saliva, in the stomach and the intestine where they break down the large proteins and convert them into amino acids that the human body can use, Glover said.

He explained that a series of small peptides (protein molecules) have been isolated that are effective inhibitors of proteases.

"These natural inhibitors, however, are not selective enough," Glover said. Although they may destroy enzymes that raise your blood pressure, they also may destroy the enzymes that break down your food, he added.

Glover said they are trying to imitate these natural inhibitors by synthesizing them in the laboratory.

"We want to synthesize a group of inhibitors which is specific for particular enzymes," he said.

Kelley, who is in charge of the synthesizing, said they are trying to create an artificial inhibitor by producing analogs and derivatives of the natural inhibitor.

Kelley said single amino acids and dipeptides (double amino acids) have proven unsuccessful. She added that she plans to experiment with tripeptides (triple amino acids) next.

Sometimes a virus is injected into a normal cell, which causes it to

transform and behave like a cancer cell, Glover said. It is not really a cancer cell, but is called a transformed cell, he added.

"If we had a group of inhibitors and knew exactly what they would do, we could study things like blood pressure relationships, blood clotting or transformation of cells," Glover said.

An understanding of these enzymes and their inhibitors could lead to methods of controlling cell transformation, blood pressure and inflammation, he added.

Glover said he hopes to have some data to release in about a year that will determine whether the artificial inhibitors are good or bad.

Still earning fewer than men

More women get doctorates

The number of women earning doctorate degrees has increased sharply over the past few years, but women still lag far behind men in terms of total doctorate winners, according to data released by Marie D. Eldridge, administrator of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Recent NCES studies show the number of women receiving earned doctorates increased 59 per cent from 1970-71 to 1974-75, going from almost 4,600 to nearly 7,300. In the same period, the number of doctorates awarded to men declined from 27,500 to 26,800, a 2.6 per cent

drop. In terms of total doctorates awarded, the proportion of women receiving doctorates went from 14 per cent in 1970-71 to 21 per cent in 1974-75.

"These data suggest that the number of women receiving doctoral degrees will not approach that of men in the near future," said Eldridge.

A similar trend seems to have occurred in the area of first-professional degrees (the degrees that prepare one to practice law, medicine, dentistry, and a number of other professions), according to

NCES. The number of women receiving such degrees nearly tripled from 2,500 to 7,000 between 1970-71 and 1974-75. At the same time, the number of men receiving such degrees went from 35,800 to 49,200. Women comprised 6.5 per cent of such first-professional degree recipients in 1970-71 and 12.5 per cent in 1974-75. Eldridge indicated that in this area too, based on current data, it is doubtful that the numbers and proportions of women in the professions will soon equal those of men.

Eldridge said the proportion of female applicants to medical schools increased from 9.4 per cent of total applicants in 1969-70 to 20.4 per cent in 1974-75. On the other hand, the total number of female applicants, 8,712 in 1974-75, was less than the number of men actually accepted, 11,674. The women's ratio of acceptances to applications, however, was higher than that for men. Although women accounted for 20.4 per cent of the total number of applicants in 1974-75, women were 22.5 per cent of those accepted.



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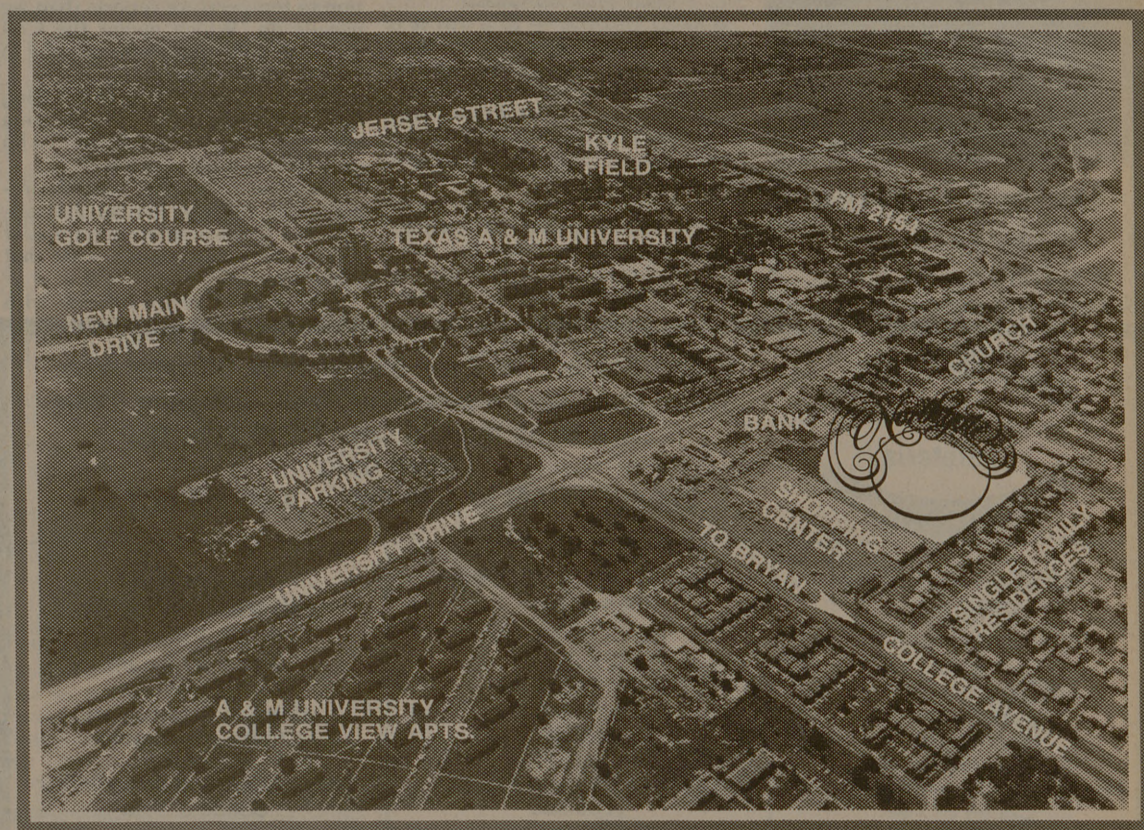
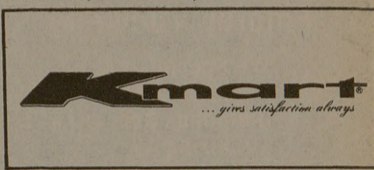
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