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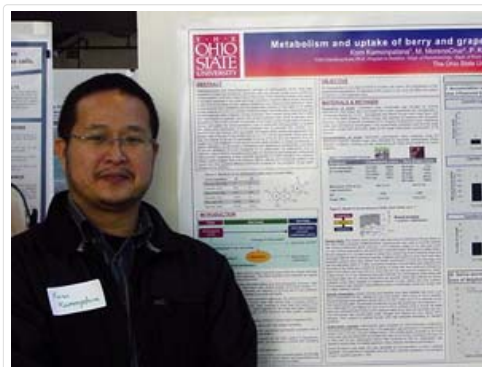
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EHE News

Combating oral cancer by eating delicious food

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Kom Kamonpatana, recipient of the Leta Gigax Duhamel Scholarship, recently received first place from the Institute of Food Technologists for a presentation of his research into oral cancer prevention. He also has received a 2011-2012 graduate research scholarship from the Ohio Agriculture Research and Development Center. Mark Failla, professor of human nutrition, serves as his dissertation advisor.



Kom Kamonpatana

Kom Kamonpatana wants to help prevent cancer of the mouth, which is diagnosed in close to 37,000 Americans each year. And he may have found a delicious way to combat the disease - by eating red or blue berries or or drinking their juices.

Kamonpatana, a doctoral student in Human Nutrition, is focusing on Anthocyanins, natural pigments responsible for the red to blue color of fruits and vegetables such as grapes, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and blue corn.

The pigments have been shown to prevent inflammation, one of the most common hallmarks to cancers, and so may lead to its potential use to prevent the disease. He is trying to determine how Anthocyanins are delivered to mouth tissues, especially since different versions of the pigments exist in different fruits.

"We all have seen children enjoy how their mouths and tongues are stained with Anthocyanins after they eat fruit snacks. We, in fact, consume different types of Anthocyanins when we choose grapes or black raspberries," he explained. "Our study is trying to understand the effect of the pigments' chemical structure on the extent of degradation and delivery to oral tissue. This information may, in turn, suggest types of fruits and vegetables best suited for dietary recommendations and/or development of food products to promote oral health."

"It interests me that these natural colorful compounds provide us not only with oral health benefit but also the aesthetic quality of food," he said. An extra benefit is that consumers can easily remember the slogan, "Eat colorful fruit."

Writer: Gemma McLuckie, Office of Advancement, College of Education and Human Ecology

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