

Garlic cure for MRSA superbug

By Craig Robertson

A SCOTTISH hospital is involved in trials that claim to have found a cure for the killer superbug MRSA. And the answer could lie in garlic.

The lethal strain that killed a Lanarkshire woman in 2002 has been treated with a compound called allicin — and been destroyed.

Microbiologists tested the cells from the dead woman and found they had no resistance to allicin.

They now believe it could be a cure for superbugs that kill 2000 people a year in Britain.

Amazingly, the wonder compound is a completely natural extract of garlic. And Dr Ron Cutler, the man leading the trials, says it had “remarkable successes” on people with MRSA.

Red tape

The news comes after doctors claimed new Government measures to tackle the spread of hospital infections with improved hygiene would fail.

Dr Cutler’s team is trying to unravel red tape that is holding up the distribution of allicin to patients and staff.

“It’s very frustrating and seems to be taking forever,” said Dr Cutler. “People accept our lab detail is fine but we need to get a clinical trial certificate.

“We’ve been working on this for six years and know the whole process takes time. A date to present our evidence to the Government in December has been put back to January.

“Some hospitals have already been phoning, asking to try it on patients and results have been very good.

“Our success with volunteers has ranged from reasonable to highly successful. Some have been remarkable. In three cases, people have been completely cleared of MRSA.

“One man from the Midlands had been in hospital for five months and allicin healed his wounds.”

Dr Cutler, a microbiologist at the University of East London, says allicin not only kills MRSA but also the ever-increasing new generation of super-superbugs.

The link with Scotland came after he read of the Lanarkshire woman’s death.

He contacted fellow microbiologist Dr Alistair Leanord at Monklands Hospital asking if he could have samples of the killer cells.

Astonishing results

The collaboration between the two men produced astonishing results.

“Dr Leanord was a great help and we are really grateful to him for sending us the cells,” said Dr Cutler. “We were delighted to find allicin destroyed the cells. That strain of MRSA simply had no resistance to it.”

Dr Leanord said, "There is a desperate need out there for a new product to tackle MRSA. Our current first line is not effective at all and our second line is becoming less effective by the day.

"I'm not surprised the solution may be as natural as garlic. All antibiotics are either natural or derivatives of natural products."

Allicin occurs naturally in garlic. It is what gives garlic its distinctive smell. It works as a powerful anti-biotic and is the plant's immune system.

It was first discovered in 1944 but was never developed as a drug because it was thought to be unstable and because of its smell. Dr Cutler has produced a stable, odourless version.