

WA gene hope for brake on cancer

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Perth researchers have discovered a gene which could slow and possibly stop the growth of a number of cancers and provide better screening for people at risk of tumours.

Professor Peter Klinken, of the WA Institute for Medical Research, said the tumour suppressor gene HLS5 controlled cell growth and could be used as a "brake cable" on cancer cells.

Research suggested that if the gene was absent, inactive or affected by mutations, people were more likely to develop a group of cancers, including breast, prostate, liver, ovarian and colon cancer.

"If that brake cable is cut, the gene can't do its job and cell growth can't be controlled, so this research aims to provide ways to either repair or replace the gene so the cancer cells can be slowed and potentially even stopped," he said.

Researchers were working with a WA biomedical company on a test for the gene, which could indicate a person's risk of developing breast, prostate, liver, ovarian or colon cancer.

"It's exciting because if we can improve screening, people can take pre-emptive measures like changing their diets, exercising and doing more self-checks for diseases like breast cancer," Professor Klinken said.