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Could Cuban technology help save U.S. lung cancer patients?

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Cuba has developed a novel lung cancer vaccine that American researchers are working to bring to the United States.

One of those researchers, Kelvin Lee, chair of the immunology department at Roswell Park Cancer Center in Buffalo, has written about this remarkable scientific alliance in a blog post for the [American Association for Cancer Research](#).

“When thinking about cutting-edge scientific innovation,” he acknowledges, “Cuba may not immediately come to mind.”

“A mystery to generations of Americans, Cuba is often thought of as being stuck in a bygone era,” he writes. “Having made multiple trips to Cuba over the last three years, I can tell you that is not the case.”

Now that diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba have thawed, Roswell Park has reached an agreement with Cuba’s Center for Molecular Immunology to bring its lung cancer vaccine, called CimaVax, to the U.S. for clinical testing -- with an eye toward U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval.

Lee explains that CimaVax is not a traditional disease-preventing vaccine. Rather, it is a therapeutic vaccine that revs up the immune system to fight lung cancer in patients who already have it, and people at high risk for it. The vaccine, given as a monthly shot, has been tried in about 5,000 patients across the world; published data show it has prolonged life with minimal vaccine-related toxicity.

Lee estimates the vaccine could complete the testing and FDA approval process in about five years – a relatively brisk pace for new drugs. “We’re also looking into the potential to use CimaVax on colon, head and neck, prostate, breast, and pancreatic cancers,” he says.

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