Australian researchers find a way to boost cross-protective capabilities of influenza A vaccine

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Australian researchers have found a way to boost the effectiveness and cross-protective capabilities of an influenza A vaccine by adding a simple component. Published this week in mBio, an online open-access journal of the American Society for Microbiology, the research in mice could lead to better seasonal flu vaccines for humans, and also vaccines that could provide community protection in the early stages of an outbreak of a novel flu virus strain.

"Influenza infections cause 250,000-500,000 deaths every year. Our best protection comes from the seasonal flu vaccine, which induces antibodies that neutralize the virus," notes Brendon Chua, a research fellow at the University of Melbourne. However, each year the seasonal flu vaccine is developed based on a prediction of the handful strains that are likely to be circulating the globe.

"The holy grail would be to develop a vaccine that cross-protects against different strains, which would be beneficial for the whole community, even if the prediction of circulating strains is wrong", says Chua. Such cross-protection could also be beneficial if a flu virus evolves to jump from another species to humans, such as what happened in recent years with the H5N1 [3] strain from birds and the H1N1 [4] strain from pigs. It currently takes at least six months to produce a new flu vaccine on a global scale.

The research team led by Chua and professor David C. Jackson, believed that using an additive, or adjuvant, with the flu vaccine might stimulate other types of antibody-independent immune responses, resulting in a much improved and cross-protective vaccine.

To read more, please click here [5].

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