

Korean scientists discover leukopenia gene

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Singapore: The Korean Health Ministry has announced that Korean medical researchers have discovered a specific gene associated with leukopenia - a disorder that causes decrease in white blood cell count. Leukopenia may lead to bleeding, life-threatening infections and even death.

The research was conducted on 978 Korean patients with Crohn's disease who were treated with immunosuppressants. Results indicated 100 percent of the patients who had two copies of the variation experienced leukopenia and more than 75 percent of those who had just one copy developed the side effect. Meanwhile, only 25.3 percent of patients without the genetic variation suffered from leukopenia.

Experts opined that the findings will aid doctors in identifying patients with a high risk of developing the disease prior to immunosuppressive therapy.

The research team also said that around 30 to 40 percent Asians who were treated with immunosuppressants developed leukopenia while only 5 percent of the westerners developed the disease.

The Health Ministry said that the discovery will aid in providing customized therapy to suit the medical conditions of the people.