

Taiwanese children more prone to liver tumors

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Singapore: Scientists at the Division of Hematology and Oncology of Taipei Veterans General Hospital's Department of Pediatrics confirmed in a study that Taiwanese children are twice as prone to liver cancer as their counterparts in other countries.

The study titled "Cancer Incidence Patterns Among Children and Adolescents in Taiwan From 1995 to 2009: A Population-Based Study," was published in the US peer-review academic journal, *Cancer*.

Dr Hung Giun-yi, lead researcher, said that comparative data analysis of five countries showed that incidence of childhood hepatic cancer in Taiwan was 4.61 per million base population per year (pmpy) more than two times the rates in Canada (2.2), the US (2), Japan (1.8), Israel (1.5) and Brazil (1.3).

Despite the nationwide hepatitis vaccination scheme implemented by the Taiwan government, the occurrences of liver cancer in Taiwan remained significantly higher. Research suggested that additional risk factors such as chronic hepatitis C infections, diet or environmental factors such as aflatoxin, and genetic factors, should be considered and investigated.

Dr Giun-yi said that Aflatoxin is a mycotoxin known to cause liver disease and cancer and is mostly found in foods such as peanuts, corn, milk and cheese. According to the US FDA, peanut butter had the highest aflatoxin-positive incidence of all

peanut products sold in Taiwan between 1997 and 2011.

The study also listed the top 10 most common pediatric cancers in Taiwan- leukemia, central nervous system tumors, lymphomas, germ cell tumors, other epithelial neoplasms, soft tissue sarcomas, neuroblastomas, malignant bone tumors, hepatic tumors and renal neoplasms.