

Possible cancer ‘ally’ found in zebrafish

Cancer Research UK in Edinburgh say they have found a potential link between the immune system and brain tumours. And they have discovered this with the help of tropical fish.



Scientists examining the brains of transparent zebrafish under the microscope noted that immune cells in the brain seem to encourage brain tumour cells to grow, and not destroy them.



The team leader Dr Dirk Sieger has recorded a short video showing the interaction with a glioblastoma which is a common kind of brain tumour, diagnosed in around 265 people a year in Scotland.

The specialised immune cells appear to engulf and break down the cancer cells.

Dr Sieger said: “From the different behaviours of microglia that we have seen in zebrafish, we now know what to look for when testing new immunotherapy drugs for brain tumours.

“If we can make a drug that can convert microglia’s alliance, then we should be able to see these immune cells attacking tumour cells.”

Cancer Research UK spent around a sixth of their total Scottish investment of £33 million last year in Edinburgh on cutting-edge research.

