

## **An immunologist finds aloe vera controls asthma symptoms and begins work in the use of aloe vera to treat MRSA**

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### **Aloe vera research in fight against MRSA**

An immunologist at the University of Strathclyde is investigating the use of aloe vera as a weapon in the fight against superbugs, including MRSA.

Dr Valerie Ferro is working to identify a chemical compound in the aloe vera plant which kills bacteria that have become resistant to all existing antibiotics. Recent studies have shown bacteria are becoming increasingly resistant to antibiotics and scientists are trying to stay one step ahead.

Dr Ferro became interested in aloe vera after her husband, a nurse with an interest in complementary medicine, suggested she take it to control asthma caused by hay fever. After regularly drinking aloe vera, the symptoms she had suffered since the age of 10 disappeared. She therefore decided to carry out some research into the properties of aloe vera to see if there was a scientific basis for this.

She said : "I had some Honours project students working on different kinds of bacteria including Shigella, which causes diarrhoea, and E.coli. They were using concentrated aloe vera on bacterial cultures and found that even at low concentrations the bacteria could be killed."

"Dr Fatma Habeeb, of Kuwait University, a clinical microbiologist and former PhD student in the Immunology Department, suggested that if it worked on intestinal bacteria, it could work on organisms like MRSA. Dr Habeeb tested different aloe vera extracts on clinical isolates of MRSA obtained from Glasgow Royal Infirmary and found them to be effective, even on the strains that are 'all-drug resistant'."

This initial work was made possible through funding from Glasgow-based charity Tenovus and Dr Ferro and Dr Habeeb will continue to collaborate to identify the active ingredient in the plant extracts that can be used in clinical applications to treat MRSA.