HEALTHY TIPS

The Venom from an Extremely Poisonous Caterpillar may Hold the Healing Tonic that Saves Lives

By bestfolkmedicine · 15/07/2021 · 2 min read



Scientists believe that a healing tonic made from the venom of this small caterpillar from southeast Queensland could be the key to the treatment of nervous system disorders like epilepsy.

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This caterpillar (Doratifera vulnerans) is from the species of the nettle caterpillar and has been used in the groundbreaking studies being done at the University of Queensland's Institute for Molecular Bioscience.

For the past four years, Andrew Walker has been researching the venom of this caterpillar after he discovered it on a field trip.

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Could this Venom Play a Crucial Role in Treatment of Nervous System Disorders?

According to Walker, they found one while they were gathering assassin bugs near Toowoomba and its odd biology and painful venom amazed him. However, before he could get any venom from it, it turned into a moth.

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He later concluded that the insects, the size of a 20 cent piece, were very common in the southeast. Their defense mechanism is to release up to 100 spines on the back and they produce venom.

Walker explains he has been stung several times by these caterpillars. The way their spine releases the venom is through their closed, but thin and sharp tips. When lightly brushed or touched, these tips break down and the venom is injected.

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The Potential of the Venom in Treatment of Disorders

The research which has been published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* journal notes that the team has unlocked a peptide source in the venom that may be used in the treatment of nervous system disorders, including epilepsy.

In the past, researchers didn't know what venom contained or how it causes pain. They're now at the start of discovering more about it and its toxins.

According to Walker, these peptides may one day be used for the development of meds that will be used for the management of disorders of the central nervous system. They would give scientists the opportunity to better the effects of conditions like epilepsy when the nervous system is too active.

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Hence, he explains that if we want to calm down the nervous system, activating some parts of it may be necessary. A colleague of Walker, Sam Robinson, was researching which molecules from the venom triggered the pain. They were shocked by its complexity.

Robinson believes that the caterpillars are using venom for more than pain-causing effects on predators.

Toxins have been used for decades as potential tools in understanding the human nervous and cardiovascular systems.

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