



IBT Scientists to Lecture in Unique Course on Disease-Fighting Foods

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Two scientists at the Institute of Biosciences and Technology, Texas A&M University, are participating in a first-in-the-world course about disease-fighting foods. The risk factor of poor diet to general health and well-being is the focus of the course, taught this spring from Texas A&M University Kingsville Citrus Center. It is sponsored by the USDA Challenge Grant program.

Dr. Wallace L. McKeehan and Dr. Richard Gunasekera are among the specialists participating in the course from sites stretching from Maryland to California. Their lectures will reach the world over the Worldwide Web and Trans-Texas VideoConference Network. McKeehan and Gunasekera do research in IBT's Center for Cancer Biology and Nutrition.

Phytochemicals, a variety of compounds produced by plants, have been researched for many years. Only in the last decade has research focused on compounds in fruits and vegetables because they show such good cancer preventive qualities.

Dr. Bhimu Patil masterminded this innovative course, entitled *Phytochemicals in Fruits and Vegetables to Improve Human Health*. Working at the Citrus Center in Kingsville, Texas, Patil pulled together 16 researchers to teach the significance of the disease-fighting compounds found in fruits and vegetables. Ten researchers reside and work outside of Texas, and six in Texas.

"Phytochemicals are also called nutraceuticals -- a generic description," says Patil. "They're called designer foods, hypernutritious foods, and sometimes functional foods. We're hearing a lot about them but no one has brought together the benefits from all their compounds, until now."

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