

Doctors insert live plant cells into lab rats

MEXICO CITY (UPI-Kyodo) Two Mexican doctors have successfully inserted live plant cells into laboratory rats in a scientific breakthrough they say helps prove the theory of evolution and could have medical applications.

Mexican Social Security Institute doctors Javier Lozoya, a medicinal plant specialist, and Ignacio Madrazo, a transplant specialist, were to discuss an international strategy for continuing investigation at a meeting Saturday with researchers from around the world.

"We have carried out what we can call an extraordinarily original experiment: It is the first time that a plant tissue has been transplanted in an animal," Lozoya said at a

news conference last week.

In a series of biotechnological propagation tests conducted over the last eight months, the doctors injected laboratory cell cultures of the *Mimosa tenuiflora* plant under the skin of hundreds of white rats.

"When we saw that the animals did not reject, but rather began to form blood vessels around the plant, and that those blood vessels began to mix with the vegetable cells and started to carry them irrigation and nutrition, we realized we had hit on something really revolutionary in terms of biology," Lozoya said.

Madrazo said the plant tissue thrived in the laboratory animals for several months and continued to grow once it was removed.

He said the experiment demonstrated "scientific evidence that the animal kingdom and the vegetable kingdom have a common origin. It makes an enormous contribution to biological knowledge of life's origin, and on the other hand, it offers the possibility of having a new resource for treating illnesses," he said.

Cells of plants with pharmacological properties could be implanted in sick patients where release of chemical agents could produce curative results, he said.

"The majority of medicines are vegetable products," and if the hypothesis were proved, he said, "possibly a patient would not have to take medicines."

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