

# Painkillers cut risk of mouth cancer: Scientists

REUTERS, London

Commonly used painkillers can reduce the risk of mouth cancer in smokers but long-term use could raise the odds of dying from heart disease, Norwegian scientists said yesterday.

The painkillers, known as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDs, halved the odds of developing mouth cancer in a study of nearly 500 smokers. The effect was comparable to quitting smoking.

However, the drugs did not

increase overall survival because the patients had a higher risk of dying of cardiovascular disease.

"These findings highlight the need for a careful risk-benefit analysis when the long-term use of NSAIDs is considered," Dr Jon Sudbo, of the Norwegian Radium Hospital in Oslo, said in the report in The Lancet medical journal.

Commonly used NSAIDs include ibuprofen and naproxen, which is sold over-the-counter by Bayer as Aleve. Newer painkillers known as COX-2 inhibitors, including Merck's

Vioxx, have been linked to a risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Merck withdrew Vioxx from the market in September, 2004, following safety concerns.

NSAIDs work by suppressing two enzymes called COX-1 and COX-2. However, they can cause gastrointestinal bleeding. COX-2 inhibitors were designed to limit the damage.

Sudbo and his team compared the use of NSAIDs on 454 heavy smokers with oral cancer and an equal number of smokers who did not have cancer. Just over 263 people in the study had used NSAIDs.

The researchers said NSAIDs cut the risk of oral cancer by 53 percent in smokers. However, 42 percent of people who took the drugs died of cardiovascular disease, compared with 7 percent in the group that did not use NSAIDs.

Sudbo said oral cancer prevention studies which will shed more light on the risks and benefits of the drugs are planned or under way.

In the United States alone, nearly 30,000 people are diagnosed with cancer of the mouth, lips or part of the throat or back of the mouth, according to the National Cancer Institute.

Smoking cigarettes, cigars or pipes and chewing tobacco account for most oral cancers. People who drink alcohol also have a higher risk of the disease than those who don't.

"Over the next few years, these trials will determine whether NSAIDs can reduce the devastating effect of oral cancer on patients, their families and public health," he added.



PHOTO: STAR

The National Front of Teachers and Employees (NFTE) Bangladesh staged a demonstration in the city yesterday to realise their demands.



PHOTO: STAR

The Garments Sramik Trade Union Kendra took out a procession at Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding bonus and salary arrears before Eid.

## 2 killed, 20 injured in Sylhet road accident

UNB, Sylhet

Two people were killed and 20 more injured when a minibus plunged into a roadside ditch on Sylhet-Bianibazar road on Thursday.

Police and witnesses said the accident took place at Chengripul at about 11:00am when the driver of the minibus, carrying a bridal party, lost his control over steering, killing two, including the minibus helper on the spot.

The deceased were identified as helper Saynul Islam, 25, and Koyson Ahmed, 15.

On information, police rushed to

the spot, rescued the injured and sent them to the Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital and Bianibazar Hospital.

The bodies were sent to morgue for autopsy.

Meanwhile, Abul Hasem, 30, joint convenor of Goainghat Jubo League, who suffered serious injuries in a road mishap on September 30, died at Sylhet Osmani Hospital on Wednesday night.