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EU grants 1.65 million euros for non-radioactive imaging research

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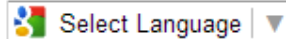
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Research is intended to be used on cancer patients and those suffering from neurological disorders.

The EU has awarded 1.65 million euros to researchers at the Hadassah University Medical Center, in Jerusalem's Ein Kerem, for testing an experimental substance – described as a breakthrough – that they developed for non-radioactive imaging, to be used on cancer patients and those suffering from neurological disorders.

Dr. Rachel Katz-Brull of the hospital's Department of Radiology will head the research project and conduct pre-clinical experiments to measure the efficacy of a non-radioactive "hyperpolar substance" that she and her colleagues discovered, for use in patients with cancer and diseases of the brain.

Described by Hadassah as "a breakthrough," the team's work focuses on developing molecular markers for medical imaging (with MRIs).

A positron-emission tomography (PET) scanner is widely used to diagnose types of cancers and the dispersal of cancerous cells, as it tracks an injected, glucose based, radio-pharmaceutical substance and attaches itself to irregular cells.

It is also used to diagnose neurological conditions such as epilepsy. But Katz-Brull developed a non-radioactive substance that can be used during MRI scans, a desired alternative to avoid harmful side effects.

If the Hadassah researcher can prove that her substance is effective, it could be used on children, pregnant women and others who must avoid exposure to radioactive substances but may require thorough testing that such scans provide. No other material like this has been found anywhere in the world.

The European Research Council of the EU is covering the cost of the study, which requires the purchase of expensive equipment and hiring of new researchers.

If the research is successful, clinical studies involving patients could follow, Hadassah said.