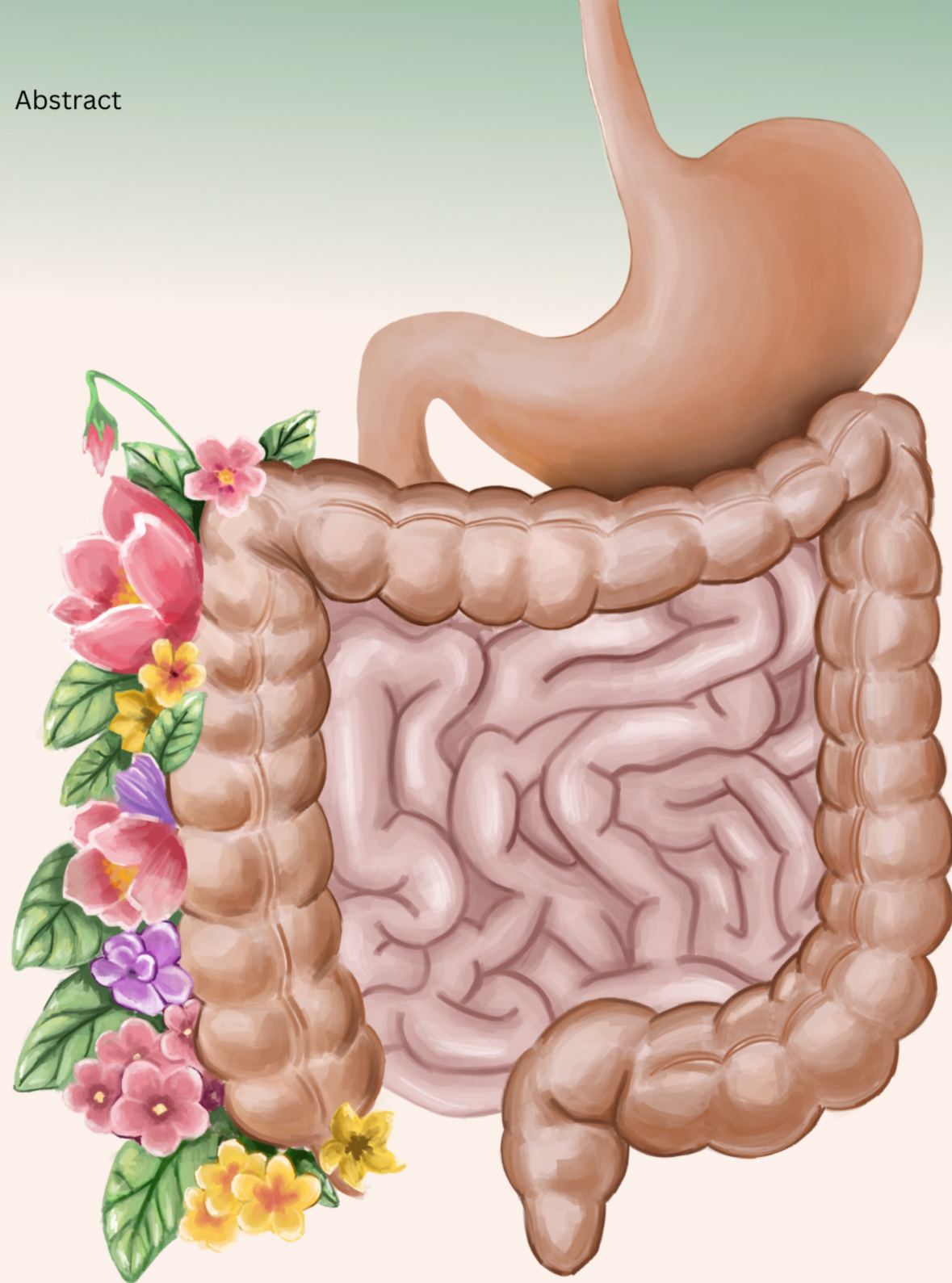




Unlocking the Secret to a Healthy Gut

doi: 10.15173/sw.v1i3.3865

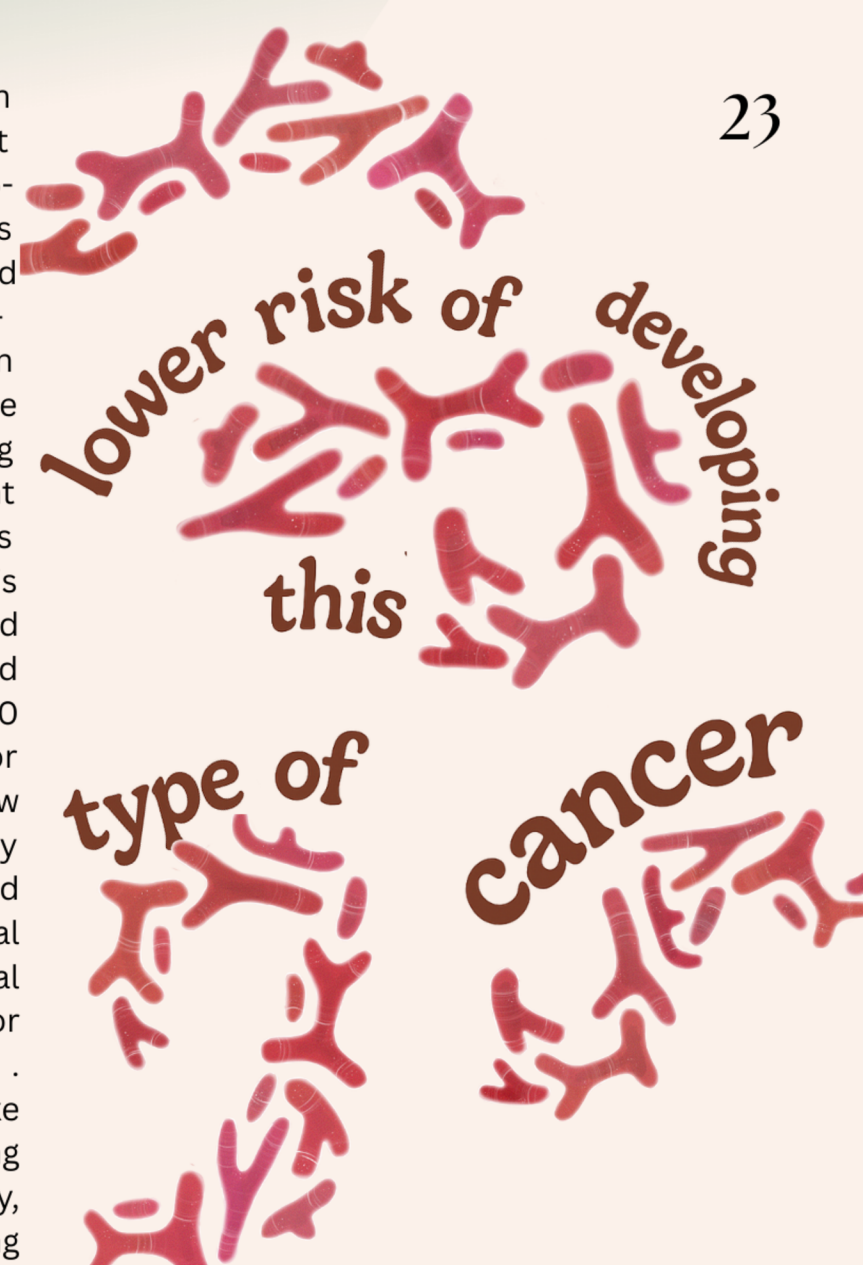
Author: Elsa Saji¹

¹McMaster University, Faculty of Science, Bachelor of Science (Honours), Sensory Motor Systems, 2027

Illustrator: Erin Zhang³

³McMaster University, Faculty of Health Science, Bachelor of Health Sciences 2028

Yogurt has a longstanding reputation for promoting a healthy gut as it possesses probiotics. Of the many probiotics in the gut, Bifidobacterium was linked to slowing the growth and spread of tumors. But another study also claimed that Bifidobacterium in tumors can be due to an imbalance of probiotics in the gut. So, this study explores if eating yogurt for a long time can prevent colorectal cancer, and if this is influenced by tumors containing this specific bacteria. Researchers used data from two studies that followed more than 150,000 people for over 20 years. They asked participants for dietary information—especially how much yogurt and dairy products they eat on a weekly basis—, lifestyle factors and of course, any incidences of colorectal cancer. For participants that had colorectal cancer, researchers tested their tumor samples for any signs of Bifidobacterium. Surprisingly, we found that yogurt intake didn't affect the overall risk for developing colorectal cancer. But interestingly, researchers found a link between eating yogurt and proximal colon cancer, which is cancer in the right side of the colon. People who ate two or more servings of yogurt every week had a lower risk of developing this type of cancer.



This was an incredibly promising finding, but it is more tricky to find out why this was happening. Researchers believe that yogurt does strengthen the gut barrier by improving the population of probiotics in the gut while keeping bacteria out of tumors, but we need more research and future studies to confirm this. Like any study, this study also has its limitations despite the promising findings. Most of the data was from surveys, which can be hard to verify since it relies on recall and personal experiences of participants. However, these findings still provide a lot of insight into how our diet can influence our health outcomes. This is an important step in continuing to advance preventative medicine and reduce the risks of so many common diseases.

