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Molecule destroys, protects varying bones

BUFFALO, N.Y., May. 10 (UPI) -- A U.S. study has found an [immune system](#) component that causes bone destruction and inflammation in autoimmune diseases also protects oral cavity bones.

[University of Buffalo](#) scientists say the molecule, IL-17, has been identified as the cause of bone destruction and inflammation in autoimmune diseases. Therapies targeting IL-17 or its cellular receptor are under development.

But now Associate Professor Sarah Gaffen and researcher Jeffrey Yu have determined IL-17 protects bones in the oral cavity from infectious pathogens that play a major role in human periodontal disease, such as Porphyromonas gingivalis.

Although animal studies showed IL-17 could be an effective therapy for rheumatoid arthritis and possibly other autoimmune diseases, the effects of an IL-17 deficiency in periodontal disease are unknown.

"I predicted these mice without the IL-17 receptor were going to be protected from periodontal bone loss, just like they're protected from arthritic bone loss," Gaffen said. "In fact, we got the opposite result. The mice without IL-17 were much more susceptible to bone loss caused by periodontal disease, compared to normal mice."

The research is detailed in the May issue of the journal Blood.

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