# Cooked Up Claims About Soy Sauce

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Soy sauce has become the latest supermarket item to contain the answer to HIV, according to a savory smorgasbord of erroneous reporting in the popular press. A key point the over-eager reporters missed is that the HIV-fighting molecule in question isn't known to be in soy sauce at all; it's only "related to flavor enhancers found in soy sauce," according to the press release from the University of Missouri School of Medicine that spawned the media reports.

The tall tale began in 2001 when the Japanese soy sauce manufacturer Yamasa, while searching for a flavor enhancer, synthesized a molecule called EFdA, which belongs to a family of compounds called nucleoside analogues. Eventually, lab research found that EFdA is a nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NRTI), which is a class of HIV-fighting drugs under the nucleoside analogue umbrella. Not only that, but the molecule is highly effective at fighting HIV, in particular when the virus is resistant to Viread (tenofovir). Merck licensed EFdA two years ago and is mum except to say the molecule is not yet in Phase II trials.

Stefan Sarafianos, PhD, an associate professor of molecular microbiology and immunology at the University of Missouri, acknowledged to POZ that the mistaken media reports could have resulted from the school's original press release on his research; its misleading headline read: "Soy sauce molecule may unlock drug therapy for HIV patients."

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