

The Lancet Letter: Fenton, B., Stanley, K., Fenton, S. and Bolton-Smith, C. (1999). Differential binding of the insecticidal lectin GNA to human blood cells. The Lancet. 354:1354-1355.

This letter generated a hypercritical response from small parts of the scientific community, most notably from Cambridge University. See

<http://www.path.cam.ac.uk/~mrc7/opinions/gmfoods.html>

This website contains a critique which simply restates what another Cambridge colleague already printed in the Lancet. The author of the web site complains about the Lancet's peer review process and then constructs an unrefereed and unorthodox web page of his own. However, what his web page is guilty of was well recognized in a letter to Science 'Health risks of GM foods: Many opinions but few data' by [Domingo JL](#) (2000), Science 288: 1748-1749 i.e. the website author provides nothing more than his own opinion about GM food.

Our letter to the Lancet was cited by this Science article as one of the few which set out to gather scientific information about the potential interactions of proteins introduced into human diets through transgenic plants. Other relevant papers on *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* lectin (GNA) or proteins expressed in transgenic plants include:

The potentially insecticidal *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* lectin demonstrates age-related mitogenicity. Summers *et al.* FEMS Immunology and Medical Microbiology Volume 33 Page 47.

Transgenic Expression of Bean -Amylase Inhibitor in Peas Results in Altered Structure and Immunogenicity. Prescott *et al.* J. Agric. Food Chem. 53: 9023 -9030

For a commentary on the latter paper see

<http://www.newscientist.com/article.ns?id=dn8347>

In conclusion evidence is accumulating that novel plant-expressed-proteins in human diets can have subtle consequences. Perhaps the ironic words below on the Cambridge website appear a little hollow in light of the new findings.....

'May I suggest, tongue firmly in cheek, that The Lancet calls for a halt in the use of kidney beans and lentils in human diets until we can more fully investigate the interactions of their lectins with human glycoproteins?'