

## Unproven 'miracle cure' cancer treatment blocked by Brazilian court

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A court in the Brazilian state of São Paulo has cut off distribution of a compound that is hailed by some as a miracle cancer cure — even though it has never been formally tested in humans.

On 11 November, to the relief of many cancer researchers, a state court overturned earlier court orders that had obliged the nation's largest university to provide the compound to hundreds of people with terminal cancer. Although the reversal applies only to requests for the drug by residents of São Paulo state, administrators at the university estimate that it covers about 80% of the orders they have received for the compound.

The compound, phosphoethanolamine, has been shown to kill tumour cells only in lab dishes and in mice. Drugs that seem promising in lab and animal studies have a notoriously high failure rate in human trials. Despite this, some chemists at the University of São Paulo's campus in São Carlos have manufactured the compound for years and distributed it to people with cancer. A few of those patients have claimed remarkable recoveries, perpetuating the compound's reputation as a miracle cure.

Dismayed by this unofficial distribution of phosphoethanolamine, the university's administration moved in September 2015 to shut it down. Patients took the university to court, and in October 2015, Brazil's Supreme Federal Court ruled in favour of one plaintiff who wanted the right to try the compound. A lower court then began granting orders for the university to provide it to others.

**Read full, original post:** [Brazilian courts tussle over unproven cancer treatment](#)