blood vessels that tumours need. The body's wound-healing process is subverted by breast-cancer tumours to help them grow and build a network of blood vessels, according to a study led by Robert Weinberg of the Whitehead Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Weinberg and his colleagues have now identified a particular type of fibroblast — a type of specialized cell found only in inflamed or regenerating tissue — that is recruited by breast-cancer tumours to help them grow and build a network of blood vessels.

The researchers used a technique called laser micro-surgery to remove fibroblasts from the tissue surrounding breast tumours. They found that, when fibroblasts were removed, the tumours were unable to grow and build a network of blood vessels.

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