



Polite Britons risk late cancer diagnosis

Almost forty per cent of British people would put off going to their GP with cancer symptoms because they don't want to bother the doctor, reveals a survey published online in the British Journal of Cancer (BJC) and presented at the NCRI Cancer Conference in Birmingham today (Wednesday).

They would also delay making an appointment because they were too embarrassed, scared, worried about what their doctor might find or too busy.

Women are more "worried about wasting their doctor's time" with 41 per cent admitting they would delay the visit for that reason, compared with 36 per cent of men.

Forty per cent of women and 34 per cent of men also said they would put off making an appointment because they are worried about what the doctor might find.

The Cancer Research UK survey – known as the Cancer Awareness Measure (CAM) – is the first in the world to set a national standard method for measuring awareness of cancer symptoms and care.

The figures are part of the National Awareness and Early Diagnosis Initiative (NAEDI) supplement that will be published in the BJC later this year, which for the first time will bring together the research underpinning the initiative.

Researchers randomly selected 3,600 people from across the UK, of whom over 2,200 were interviewed face-to-face.

Professor Jane Wardle, from Cancer Research UK's Health Behaviour Research Centre based at University College London, said: "If we were to carry out this survey in other countries, I suspect that the results might be different – because it's typically British to think "I mustn't bother the doctor".

"But when this etiquette stops us talking to the GP about potentially serious symptoms, it can be dangerous.

"A lot of work now needs to be done to help people feel like they can go to their doctor as soon as they find something that could be a symptom of cancer.

"Changes to public attitudes along with changes within the health-care system will be fundamental to making a difference.

"Cancer is more likely to be treated successfully when it's spotted early, so it's crucial that we do something with the results of this survey quickly."

People from more deprived areas cited different reasons why they would delay, such as being too embarrassed or being worried that they might have cancer.

More affluent people said they were more concerned about the practical barriers, like being too busy and having too many other things to worry about.

Sara Hiom, Cancer Research UK's director of health information who worked on the survey, said: "We believe that thousands of deaths could be avoided each year in the UK if cancers were diagnosed earlier. We wanted to find out why we were behind the best in Europe on early diagnosis.

"This survey will be a baseline for understanding why people sometimes put off such a crucial appointment, and for measuring the effect of any initiatives that aim to fix this problem.

"Cancer Research UK is working closely with the Department of Health and NHS to improve cancer survival through earlier diagnosis as part of a major national initiative called the National Awareness and Early Diagnosis Initiative."

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For media enquiries please contact Rachel Gonzaga in the NCRI press office on 07769 641 423, or the London press office on 020 7061 8300, or the out-of-hours duty press officer on 07050 264059

Watch an interview with Cancer Research UK's Sara Hiom here: <http://bit.ly/7JW8w>

Read the abstract of this talk on the NCRI Cancer Conference website: http://www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference/programme/speakerAbstracts/2009Para_Jane_Wardle.asp

The national survey was developed by Cancer Research UK and funded by the Department of Health. This work is one of the national workstreams of NAEDI, which is co chaired by the Department of Health and Cancer Research UK. NAEDI is one of the priorities set out within the Cancer Reform Strategy. Measuring public awareness of cancer will inform both national and local strategies and interventions to support earlier diagnosis.

Health Behaviour Research Centre

The Health Behaviour Research Centre is based at University College London and receives funding from Cancer Research UK for research in public attitudes and cancer related health behaviours including cancer screening, diet and smoking. If you would like to participate in future research about your attitudes to cancer you can join the 'Participant's Panel' at www.attitudestohealth.co.uk

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Cancer Research UK

- Together with its partners and supporters, Cancer Research UK's vision is to beat cancer.
- Cancer Research UK carries out world-class research to improve understanding of the disease and find out how to prevent, diagnose and treat different kinds of cancer.
- Cancer Research UK ensures that its findings are used to improve the lives of all cancer patients.
- Cancer Research UK helps people to understand cancer, the progress that is being made and the choices each person can make.
- Cancer Research UK works in partnership with others to achieve the greatest impact in the global fight against cancer.
- For further information about Cancer Research UK's work or to find out how to support the charity, please call 020 7009 8820 or visit www.cancerresearchuk.org.uk

About the NCRI Cancer Conference

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Conference is the UK's major forum for showcasing the best British and international cancer research. The Conference offers unique opportunities for networking and sharing knowledge by bringing together world leading experts from all cancer research disciplines. The fifth annual

NCRI Cancer Conference is taking place from the 4-7 October 2009 at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham.

For more information visit www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference

About the NCRI

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) was established in April 2001. It is a UK-wide partnership between the government, charity and industry which promotes co-operation in cancer research among the 21 **member organisations** for the benefit of **patients**, the public and the scientific community.

For more information visit www.ncri.org.uk

NCRI members are: the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI); Association for International Cancer Research; Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council; Breakthrough Breast Cancer; Breast Cancer Campaign; Cancer Research UK; CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA, Department of Health; Economic and Social Research Council; Leukaemia Research; Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research; Macmillan Cancer Support; Marie Curie Cancer Care; Medical Research Council; Northern Ireland Health and Social Care (Research & Development Office); Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation; Scottish Government Health Directorates (Chief Scientist Office); Tenovus; Welsh Assembly Government (Wales Office of Research and Development for Health & Social Care); The Wellcome Trust; and Yorkshire Cancer Research.

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