

## **POOR MEN MORE LIKELY TO DIE FROM BOWEL CANCER**

DEPRIVED men are more likely to die from bowel cancer than men from the most affluent section of society, new research\* presented at the NCRI Cancer Conference in Liverpool this week shows.

The study, funded by the NHS in Scotland\*\*, found that a link between deprivation and bowel cancer deaths was mainly seen in men rather than women.

Bowel cancer includes both colon and rectal cancers – and researchers in Scotland found that, in addition to the effects of deprivation on bowel cancer deaths, deprived men were also at greater risk of developing rectal cancer.

Using data from the Scottish Cancer registry, researchers analysed the incidence rate and death rate for five different socio-economic sections of society from 2004 to 2009.\*\*\*

The study looked at a total of around 12,000 colon cancer cases and more than 6,000 cases of rectal cancer.

Researchers said that the link between rates of rectal cancer in men and deprivation was a recent trend – one that has only become more evident since the mid-1990s.

While the relationship between bowel cancer mortality and deprivation is already well established – this study found that the link is stronger among men.

Study author Professor Robert Steele, based at the University of Dundee, said: "People's knowledge of bowel cancer risks, screening uptake and lifestyles tend to differ depending on their socio-economic background – these factors may play an important role in why deprivation has more of an effect on men and is more apparent for rectal cancer."

Bowel cancer is the third most common cancer in the UK - around 40,000 people are diagnosed with the disease each year. Most bowel cancers are in the large bowel (colon), with about 1 in 3 cancers in the rectum.

Alongside family history of bowel cancer and getting older, obesity and diets high in red and processed meat and low in fibre have an important influence on risk of bowel cancer.

Dr Jane Cope, director of the NCRI, said: "We know from previous studies that people from more deprived areas are more likely to smoke or to be very overweight. They are also less likely to be screened for bowel cancer or to be aware of the signs and symptoms of the disease contributing to later diagnosis and potentially to poorer outcomes.

"We need new approaches to address these disparities if we are to reduce inequality in cancer survival."

Hazel Nunn, head of health information at Cancer Research UK, said: "When

it comes to bowel cancer people can help stack the odds in their favour by eating a diet high in fibre and low in red and processed meat, not smoking, cutting down on alcohol, maintaining a healthy bodyweight, keeping physically active and seeing a GP as soon as possible if they notice anything unusual about their body."

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### **ENDS**

**For media enquiries please contact Angela Balakrishnan in the London press office on 020 3469 8300, the NCRI press office on 0151 239 6043, or, out-of-hours, the duty press officer on 07050 264 059.**

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#### **Notes to Editors:**

\*Steele, P et al. – Associations between deprivation and colorectal cancer incidence and mortality in Scotland, 2011 (<http://www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference/2011abstracts/abstracts/A77.html>)

\*\*Funded by the Information Services Division is part of the NHS in Scotland. ISD provides health information, health intelligence, statistical services and advice that support the NHS in improving the quality of health and care and helps planning and decision making.

\*\*\*Researchers used data from the Scottish Cancer Registry. They analysed the European age standardised incidence rates between 2004 and 2008 and mortality rates between 2005 and 2009. Deprivation was estimated using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2006).

When bowel cancer is found at the earliest stage, there is an excellent chance of survival with more than 90 per cent of people surviving the disease at least five years.

Bowel cancer symptoms include:

- Bleeding from the back passage (rectum) or blood in your poo
- A lasting change in normal bowel habits towards diarrhoea or looser stools
- A lump in your abdomen (more common on the right side) or in your rectum
- A straining feeling in the rectum
- Losing weight
- Pain in your abdomen or rectum

If any of these symptoms last more than three weeks, don't delay – go see your doctor.



#### **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 seventh annual NCRI Cancer Conference is taking place from the 6-9 November 2011 at the BT Convention Centre in Liverpool. For more information visit [www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference](http://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 22 member organisations for the benefit of patients, the public and the scientific community. For more information visit [www.ncri.org.uk](http://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 CANCER UK, Department of Health; Economic and Social Research Council; Leukaemia & Lymphoma 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; The Prostate Cancer Charity; Welsh Government (National Institute for Social Care and Health Research); The Wellcome Trust; and Yorkshire Cancer Research.

[www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference](http://www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference)

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