

MEDICS MISS KEY OPPORTUNITIES TO PREVENT CANCERS LINKED TO OBESITY

People who work in health care are failing to give patients crucial information about the link between obesity and cancer according to new research presented today (Tuesday) at the National Cancer Research Institute Cancer Conference (NCRI) in Liverpool.

Researchers from Dundee University will warn that not enough is being done to prevent obesity related cancers developing or to reduce the risk of cancers returning after treatment – despite obesity being the largest preventable cause of cancer after smoking.

Their research explored the acceptability of offering advice about weight loss through changing diet and physical activity for people who had previously had pre-cancerous polyps which had been detected through bowel screening.

And another part of the research worryingly found that patients who had been through diagnosis and treatment for bowel cancer had been given very little guidance on post treatment diet, physical activity or weight management. This led to confusion about how changes to their lifestyle might prevent further disease and maintain wellbeing.

Further research also showed that health care professionals involved in the treatment and after care of patients with bowel cancer felt uncomfortable about discussing diet and lifestyle with their patients and they didn't necessarily see it as part of their role.

Yet previous research has shown that lifestyle information given by a clinician is likely to result in changing health behaviours relating to obesity. Guidance from a number of agencies recommends that lifestyle advice should be part of bowel cancer patients' follow up treatment.

Professor Annie Anderson, study author from Dundee University, said: "Our results show we're missing key opportunities to provide crucial information to the people who need it most. Obesity is having a huge impact on cancer incidence worldwide. If we are to tackle the rising cancer incidence, we must do all we can to combat obesity.

"Cancer doctors and nurses need better training in how to approach this sensitive subject. And for patients, who have already been treated for bowel cancer and are overweight, the slate needs to be wiped and they should be advised and supported to eat a healthy diet and take regular exercise – to stack the odds against the cancer returning.

"The hospital environments must also be improved. It gives the wrong message to see fast food outlets in hospitals."

Dr Jane Cope, director of the NCRI, said: "Scientists estimate that in the UK, the current number of people who are overweight and obese could lead to around 19,000 cases of cancer a year. So this is an important area of research and health care professionals should consider whether they can be more proactive in offering advice."

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For media enquiries please contact Laura Dibb in the NCRI press office on 0151 239 6045, or the London press office on 020 3469 8300, or, out-of-hours, the duty press officer on 07050 264 059.

Notes to Editors:

View the conference abstract here:

<http://www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference/2011abstracts/abstracts/Para23.html>

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

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

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

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