

PRESS RELEASE

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UNDERSTANDING CANCER WORRIES COULD BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO SEEKING HELP

RECOGNISING the reasons people worry about a potential cancer diagnosis could help ease concern and encourage people with possible cancer symptoms to see their doctor earlier, according to research* presented at the National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Conference.

Researchers based at University College London found that 62 per cent** of people in the UK*** worry about their risk of getting cancer. But until now, little was known about what it is about cancer that worries them. So the researchers asked over 2,000 people how worried they were about various aspects of cancer.

Their findings show that about two thirds worry about the emotional impact of a cancer diagnosis and dying from cancer. This was closely followed by worries about cancer treatments, which were shared by 50 per cent of people. Worries about the social consequences of a cancer diagnosis were less pronounced, with only about 25 per cent of people in the UK worrying about what a diagnosis of cancer would mean for their important relationships.

The researchers also looked at which groups of the population were more worried. They found that women and younger people were more likely to worry about cancer in general, while ethnic minorities in the UK were more likely to specifically worry about the social consequences of a cancer diagnosis.

The team interviewed more than 2,000 adults aged between 18 and 70 and asked questions on 12 different potential areas of concern. These included worry about being diagnosed with cancer, dying from cancer, cancer treatments, financial problems and the effect the disease could have on relationships.

Charlotte Vrinten, lead author based at University College London, said: "We know that fear of cancer can put some people off seeking help for possible cancer symptoms. This study highlights the number of people who have concerns about cancer, and the variety of concerns they may have.

"Everyone reacts differently to worry. For some, it can encourage them to go to their doctor, but it puts other people off. We now need to find out why worry motivates people differently so that we can ease the fears of those who are put off seeing their doctor, because undue fear of cancer may cost people their lives. It's also important to remember that cancer treatments and survival are improving and a cancer diagnosis doesn't have to be dreaded like it used to be."

Martin Ledwick, Cancer Research UK's head nurse, said: "We've all had times when we've wondered whether to see a GP, but getting unusual or persistent changes checked out is really important. Research that helps uncover why some people worry about cancer is vital because it helps us recognise those fears and understand how we can start to address them.

"Doctors are there to help spot cancer symptoms early when treatment is more likely to be successful. Delaying a visit could save up bigger problems for later. So if you've noticed anything that isn't normal for you, make an appointment to see your doctor. Or you can phone our cancer information nurses on 0808 800 4040 to discuss any concerns."

Dr Karen Kennedy, NCRI Director, said: "This work highlights the importance of research to understand people's concerns about cancer and the worries they experience. By working in collaboration and listening to the views of people affected by cancer, and who may be affected in future, we can find ways to break down the barriers that people face when thinking about seeking advice from their doctor or attending screening appointments."

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Notes to editors:

*[C.Vrinten et al., What is it about cancer that worries people? A population-based survey of adults in England](#)

**55% per cent worried occasionally or sometimes and 7 per cent worried often or very often

***2048 people were surveyed and this sample was weighted to represent the UK population

About the NCRI

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) is a UK-wide partnership of cancer research funders, established in 2001. Its 19 member organisations work together to accelerate progress in cancer-related research through collaboration, to improve health and quality of life.

NCRI works to coordinate research related to cancer, to improve the quality and relevance of the research and to accelerate translation of the research into clinical practice for the benefit of patients.

NCRI members are: Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council; Bloodwise; Breast Cancer Now; Cancer Research UK; Children with Cancer UK, Department of Health; Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC); Macmillan Cancer Support; Marie Curie; Medical Research Council (MRC); Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Public Health Agency (Research & Development Department); Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund; Prostate Cancer UK; Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation; Scottish Government Health Directorates (Chief Scientist Office); Tenovus Cancer Care; The Wellcome Trust; Welsh Assembly Government (Health and Care Research Wales); and Worldwide Cancer Research.

For more information visit www.ncri.org.uk

About the NCRI Cancer Conference

The NCRI Cancer Conference is the UK's largest cancer research forum for showcasing the latest advances in British and international oncological research spanning basic and translational studies to clinical trials and patient involvement.

- The conference offers unique opportunities to network and share knowledge by bringing together world-leading experts from all cancer research disciplines.
- The NCRI Cancer Conference is taking place from 6-9 November 2016 at the BT Convention Centre in Liverpool.
- For more information visit conference.ncri.org.uk; Twitter @NCRI_Partners; #NCRI2016

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About Cancer Research UK

- Cancer Research UK is the world's leading cancer charity dedicated to saving lives through research.
- Cancer Research UK's pioneering work into the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer has helped save millions of lives.
- Cancer Research UK receives no government funding for its life-saving research. Every step it makes towards beating cancer relies on every pound donated.
- Cancer Research UK has been at the heart of the progress that has already seen survival in the UK double in the last forty years.
- Today, 2 in 4 people survive their cancer for at least 10 years. Cancer Research UK's ambition is to accelerate progress so that by 2034, 3 in 4 people will survive their cancer for at least 10 years.
- Cancer Research UK supports research into all aspects of cancer through the work of over 4,000 scientists, doctors and nurses.
- Together with its partners and supporters, Cancer Research UK's vision is to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured.

For further information about Cancer Research UK's work or to find out how to support the charity, please call 0300 123 1022 or visit www.cancerresearchuk.org. Follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

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