

NEW LINK BETWEEN GROWTH FACTORS AND EARLY PROSTATE CANCER FOUND

A new study presented at the National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) conference in Liverpool next week has found potential new biomarkers for very early prostate cancer in men with no symptoms of the disease (Saturday).

The researchers from the University of Bristol investigated levels of insulin-like growth factors (IGFs) and IGF-binding proteins (IGFBPs) in men whose cancer had been detected through prostate-specific antigen (PSA) screening.

They compared 2,686 men with prostate cancer with 2,766 men who didn't have cancer and found that specific growth factors (IGF-II) and proteins (IGFBP-2 and IGFBP-3) were all linked to an increased risk of the disease.

But they found there was no link between the best known growth factor (IGF-1) levels and a higher risk of prostate cancer.

The growth factors – IGFs and IGFBPs – regulate normal growth and development of organs and tissues, especially during foetal development and childhood.

Dr Mari-Anne Rowlands, study author from the University of Bristol, said: "It's too early to be certain but these results suggest that we may have identified potential new biomarkers for very early prostate cancer in men with no symptoms.

"Now we need more research to determine whether levels of these potential biomarkers predict which prostate cancers detected by screening might progress to become life-threatening.

"We can then start to examine what other factors might affect levels of these growth factors and whether changing diet or lifestyle could reduce a man's risk of prostate cancer, or for men with the disease, how quickly it might progress."

Professor Malcolm Mason, Cancer Research UK's prostate cancer expert, said: "Identifying men at greater risk of developing prostate cancer is a major priority at the moment, since it may be that offering them screening would have greater benefits than the very small benefits seen when the whole population is screened. This study could be a very important step forward in identifying such men who should be screened."

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Notes to editors:

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 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 & 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; Welsh Assembly Government (Wales Office of Research and Development for Health & Social Care); The Wellcome Trust; and Yorkshire Cancer Research.

About Cancer Research UK

- Cancer Research UK is the world's leading cancer charity dedicated to saving lives through research
- The charity's groundbreaking work into the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer has helped save millions of lives. This work is funded entirely by the public.
- Cancer Research UK has been at the heart of the progress that has already seen survival rates double in the last forty 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 beat cancer.

For further information about Cancer Research UK's work or to find out how to support the charity, please call 020 7121 6699 or visit www.cancerresearchuk.org

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