

PRESS RELEASE

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ONE IN SIX WOMEN DIAGNOSED WITH BREAST CANCER HAVE A SYMPTOM OTHER THAN A LUMP

AROUND one in six women (17 per cent) diagnosed with breast cancer go to their doctor with a symptom other than a lump – the most commonly reported breast cancer symptom – according to new research* presented at the 2016 National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer conference in Liverpool.

Breast symptoms, other than a breast lump, that may be a sign of cancer (termed ‘non-lump’ in the study) include nipple abnormalities, breast pain, skin abnormalities, ulceration, shape abnormalities and an infected or inflamed breast.

Researchers from UCL examined the data of more than 2,300 women diagnosed with breast cancer in England in 2009/10. They found that, although most women with breast cancer sought help quickly, those with ‘non-lump’ symptoms were more likely to delay going to their doctor compared with women with a breast lump alone.

Women with both a breast lump and ‘non-lump’ symptoms were also more likely to delay seeking help.

Women presenting with breast ulceration, nipple abnormalities, breast infection or inflammation, swollen arm or armpit, and pain in the armpit were more likely to wait longer than three months to seek help.

The research used data from 2009/10 National Audit of Cancer Diagnosis in Primary Care. There are more than 53,600 breast cancers diagnosed in the UK every year and 11,400 deaths from the disease annually.

Monica Koo, presenting author based at UCL, said: “Our research shows around one in six women diagnosed with breast cancer have symptoms other than a breast lump. These women are more likely to delay going to the doctor compared to women with breast lump alone.”

“It’s crucial that women are aware that a lump is not the only symptom of breast cancer. If they are worried about any breast symptoms, the best thing to do is to get it checked by a doctor as soon as possible. Diagnosing cancer earlier really is key in order to increase the chances of survival. Symptom awareness campaigns such as the Be Clear on Cancer campaign should continue to emphasise breast symptoms other than breast lump.”

Dr Karen Kennedy, Director of the NCRI, said: “This research shows that, all too often, women are delaying going to their doctor with symptoms of breast cancer. This could be because people are simply unaware that breast cancer can present in many different ways, not just through the presence of a lump. With a disease like breast cancer, it’s essential to be diagnosed as early as possible so that a treatment plan can be developed and started. Awareness campaigns need to raise awareness of all of the potential symptoms of breast cancer so that people know how to spot the signs and when to go to a doctor.”

Dr Jem Rashbass, Public Health England Cancer Lead, said: “It is hugely important to catch breast cancer early. Lumps are not the only sign and our Be Clear on Cancer campaign emphasises that women should tell their GP if they notice any changes to their breasts, such as nipple discharge or changes to the skin of the breast. As well as the campaign, breast screening is offered to women aged 50-70 and can help detect cancer earlier and improve survival.”

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Notes to editor:

* Typical and atypical symptoms in women with breast cancer: Evidence of variation in diagnostic intervals from a national audit of cancer diagnosis

<http://abstracts.ncri.org.uk/abstract/typical-and-atypical-symptoms-in-women-with-breast-cancer-evidence-of-variation-in-diagnostic-intervals-from-a-national-audit-of-cancer-diagnosis/>

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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 Partners 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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