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## **MEN HIT BY 'INEXPLICABLE' GREATER CANCER DEATH RISK**

MEN ARE almost 40 per cent more likely than women to die from cancer, reveals a report published today (Monday) by the National Cancer Intelligence Network (NCIN) and Cancer Research UK together with the Men's Health Forum to mark Men's Health Week.

And they are 16 per cent more likely to develop the disease in the first place.

After excluding breast cancer and cancers specific to one or other sex from the analysis\*, the difference is even greater – with men being almost 70 per cent more likely to die from cancer and over 60 per cent more likely to develop the disease.

The researchers then looked at the figures, excluding lung cancer as well, because the disease and its main risk factor, smoking, is known to be more common in men.

They expected to see that, across the broad range of remaining cancer types, men and women were just as likely as each other to die from and get the disease.

But they found that for all of these cancers combined, men were still 70 per cent more likely than women to die from cancer and 60 per cent more likely to get cancer.

Experts suggest that a possible explanation for the differences seen for some types of cancer could be down to stereotypical male behaviour – like down playing important early symptoms and having an unhealthy lifestyle.

Professor David Forman, information lead for the NCIN, said: "For many of the types of cancer we looked at that affect both sexes, there's no known biological reason why men should be at a greater risk than women, so we were surprised to see such consistent differences.

“After taking out the effect of age, men were significantly more likely than women to die from every one of the specific types of cancer considered and, apart from melanoma, they were also significantly more likely to develop the disease.

“Men have a reputation for having a ‘stiff upper lip’ and not being as health-conscious as women.

“What we see from this report could be a reflection of this attitude, meaning men are less likely to make lifestyle changes that could reduce their risk of the disease and less likely to go to their doctor with cancer symptoms. Late diagnosis makes most forms of the disease harder to treat.”

The report looked at the number of cancer deaths in the UK in 2007 and the number of new cases of cancer in 2006, broken down by cancer type.

The cancers that were not sex-specific were grouped together and the researchers then looked at the ratio of men to women in each category.

Professor Alan White, Professor of Men’s Health at Leeds Metropolitan University and Chair of the Men’s Health Forum, said: “The evidence shows that men are generally not aware that, as well as smoking, carrying excess weight around the waist, having a high alcohol intake and a poor diet and their family history all contribute to their increased risk of developing and dying prematurely from cancer, but more research needs to be done before we can be sure exactly why this gender gap exists.

“This report clearly demonstrates that a concerted effort needs to be made into getting the public, the health professionals and the policy makers aware of the risks men are facing. Many of these deaths could be avoided by changes in lifestyle and earlier diagnosis.”

Sara Hiom, director of health information at Cancer Research UK, said: “We know that around half of all cancers could be prevented by changes to lifestyle and it’s worrying that this message could be falling on deaf ears for men.

“Importantly, for many cancers, the disease is more likely to be treated successfully if caught early. Delays in reporting symptoms to a doctor could be helping to fuel this gender gap in cancer mortality.

“Cancer Research UK and the Department of Health are key players in the National Awareness and Early Diagnosis Initiative (NAEDI), part of which aims to understand the reasons why people put off telling their GP about cancer symptoms and how to overcome them.

“This report tells us that NAEDI could make a real difference to understanding why cancer outcomes for men are so different.”

Professor Mike Richards, National Cancer Director said: “As part of NAEDI, the Department and the Football Foundation are joint funding an ‘Ahead of the Game’ programme to promote early presentation. This one-year pilot programme, will use the appeal of football to raise awareness of lung, bowel and prostate cancers in men aged 55 and over, and selected football clubs across the country will receive funding to target local men over 55 and raise cancer awareness.

“Recently the Department of Health and the NHS Cancer Screening Programme agreed to provide funding for the Bobby Moore Fund ‘There’s Moore to Know’ campaign on bowel cancer.

“Through these new approaches we hope to raise awareness about the signs and symptoms of cancer, and encourage men with symptoms to seek help earlier.”

**ENDS**

For media enquiries please contact Rachel Gonzaga in the Cancer Research UK press office on 020 7061 8252 or, out-of-hours, the duty press officer on 07050 264 059.

## **Notes to editors:**

\* \* Oesophagus, stomach, colorectal, liver, pancreas, malignant melanoma, kidney, bladder, brain and CNS, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, multiple myeloma, leukaemia. Breast cancer was excluded from this analysis as it is very rare in men.

The report can be downloaded from the Cancer Research UK CancerStats website or the NCIN website on Monday.

## **About Cancer Research UK**

- Together with its partners and supporters, Cancer Research UK's vision is to beat cancer.
- Cancer Research UK carries out world-class research to improve understanding of the disease and find out how to prevent, diagnose and treat different kinds of cancer.
- Cancer Research UK ensures that its findings are used to improve the lives of all cancer patients.
- Cancer Research UK helps people to understand cancer, the progress that is being made and the choices each person can make.
- Cancer Research UK works in partnership with others to achieve the greatest impact in the global fight against cancer.
- For further information about Cancer Research UK's work or to find out how to support the charity, please call 020 7009 8820 or visit [www.cancerresearchuk.org.uk](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org.uk).

## **About the National Cancer Intelligence Network (NCIN)**

- The NCIN was established in May 2008 and its remit is to coordinate the collection, analysis and publication of comparative national statistics on diagnosis, treatment and outcomes for all types of cancer
- As part of the National Cancer Research Institute, the NCIN aims to promote efficient and effective data collection at each stage of the cancer journey
- Patient care will be monitored by the NCIN through expert analyses of up-to-date statistics
- The NCIN will drive improvements in the standards of care and clinical outcomes through exploiting data
- The NCIN will support audit and research programmes by providing cancer information
- Visit [www.ncin.org.uk](http://www.ncin.org.uk) for more information

## **About the Centre for Men's Health, Leeds Metropolitan University**

Established in 2004 the work of the Centre covers three main research areas:

- Gendered health epidemiology
- Men and Health Promotion
- Men's experiences of illness and diagnosis

Visit [www.leedsmet.ac.uk/health/menshealth](http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/health/menshealth) for more information.