

Strict embargo: 00.01 hrs  
Thursday 25 June, 2009

## **BLACK PEOPLE AT GREATER RISK OF PROSTATE AND STOMACH CANCERS**

BLACK people are up to three times more likely to get prostate and stomach cancer than the white population, according to the first national report on cancer in ethnic groups presented by the National Cancer Intelligence Network (NCIN) and Cancer Research UK in Birmingham today (Thursday).

Black men and women were nearly twice as likely as white people to get stomach cancer.

And black men were up to three times more likely than white men to get prostate cancer.

The difference in risk between black and white men was greater for men under 65, suggesting that black men are more likely to get the disease at a younger age.

The report is the first national analysis of cancer incidence in ethnic groups and looked at all cases of cancer diagnosed in England between 2002 and 2006.

Professor David Forman, of the NCIN, said: "We know from smaller studies and some international research that black people are more likely to get some forms of cancer than the rest of the population.

"But by looking at these figures, this is the first time we can show that these trends really do exist throughout the country.

"Until now, researchers have been using different ways of classifying ethnicity, like surnames. This is the first time we've used ethnicity recorded at the hospital, so this is the most complete representation of cancer by ethnic group yet."

Stomach cancer is caused by an infection called Helicobacter pylori, smoking and a diet high in salty and processed foods or low in fruit and vegetables.

Age is the main risk factor for prostate cancer, and genetics can play a role. It is not known why black men are at such an increased risk of the disease.

The report – presented at the NCIN annual conference in Birmingham today – also found that black people were nearly three times more likely to get myeloma – a bone marrow cancer.

And Asian women could be up to 80 per cent more likely than white women to get mouth cancer.

Professor Forman continued: “We don’t know why these differences exist. The reasons could mainly be genetic, but we think that lifestyle factors could have a role to play.

“For example, different diets in the black community could be helping to fuel higher stomach cancer rates, but at this stage we just don’t know.

“We now need more research to understand why these differences exist and to begin to tackle these inequalities.”

Dr Lesley Walker, director of cancer information at Cancer Research UK, said:  
“This report is a hugely important step forward in understanding how such a complex disease affects people from different ethnic groups.

“While the white population is at a higher risk overall from cancer, this report highlights the increased risk of certain cancers in the black population.

“The next step is to think about how we can target health messages appropriately – making sure different communities are aware of the signs and symptoms of the cancers that are more likely to affect them.”

Professor Mike Richards, national cancer director, said: “The NCIN was formed to help improve cancer services through good quality data.

“This report is a very significant move towards this aim. Based on what it shows, we will be able to measure the effect of any policies we now target to ethnic minority communities.”

## **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:**

Around 24 per cent of cancer patients included in the report were of an unknown ethnicity. To look at the impact of the unknowns on the overall rates, the statistics were adjusted to assume the ‘unknowns’ were either entirely from the white population or that they were preferentially from non-white ethnic groups.

People who identified themselves as Black British, African, Caribbean or other ethnicities with African ancestral origin, were classed as black in this report.

People who identified themselves as having Asian ancestry or as Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or other Asian ethnicities were classed as Asian in this report.

Overall, ethnic minority groups were up to 40 per cent less likely to develop cancer than the white population.

### **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 June 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