

Perceived health can predict survival of esophago-gastric cancer

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Changes in patients' self-rated quality of life after treatment for esophago-gastric cancer can predict the chances for long-term survival. This is the result researchers at the Swedish medical university Karolinska Institutet made, in a new study published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

"The patient's self-rated quality of life, provide indications of whether he or she will survive. If the patient is experiencing poor physical recovery, [fatigue](#) and pain after treatment, this should be taken very seriously and lead to further investigation," says Pernilla Lagergren, researcher at Karolinska Institutet.

Esophageal and gastric cancers are aggressive tumors and the chance of surviving five years after treatment, is approximately 30-50 percent. Therefore it is very urgent to find factors that can predict the chances of survival after treatment.

In the present study the scientists at Karolinska Institutet used a well-tested questionnaire to measure patients' self-rated quality of life among 132 patients diagnosed with esophageal or [gastric cancer](#). The survey measures the six functional aspects of health and eight frequent symptoms in cancer patients. Participants in the study filled in a questionnaire before and six months after treatment. Patients were followed up at least five years and they looked primarily at how many people survived.

The results of this study show that patients who have problems with shortness of breathe before treatment have a poorer chance of survival. Patients who recovered physical function after six months had a better chance of survival compared with patients who do not recover their physical functions. Patients who reported greater problems with fatigue or pain had a smaller chance of survival compared with those who did not experience such problems.

"An explanation for this may be that the patient unconsciously detects the recurrence of the tumor before it can be determined by the health care system," says Pernilla Lagergren.

More information: The prognostic value of changes in health-related quality of life scores during curative treatment for esophago-gastric cancer, Journal of Clinical Oncology, Epub ahead of print 1 March 2010. [paper link](#)

Provided by Karolinska Institutet

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