

New link between growth factors and early prostate cancer found

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A new study by researchers from the University of Bristol, presented at the National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) conference today, has found potential new biomarkers for very early prostate cancer in men with no symptoms of the disease.

The researchers, from the University's School of Social and Community Medicine, investigated levels of insulin-like growth factors (IGFs) and IGF-binding proteins (IGFBPs) in [men](#) whose cancer had been detected through 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 novel [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 how diet or lifestyle factors might affect levels of these growth factors levels and whether changing these 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.”

Provided by University of Bristol

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