

# Doctors don't need to fear red heads

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A study in the *British Medical Journal's* Christmas issue today confirms that there is no need for doctors to fear red heads.

The research concludes that, contrary to popular belief, people with red hair do not bleed any more than other patients.

The authors, led by surgeon Jonathan Barry from Morriston Hospital in Swansea, say that "red haired patients are traditionally regarded with a degree of trepidation by surgeons and anaesthetists alike due to a reputation for excessive bleeding, reduced [pain threshold](#) and a propensity to develop hernias".

Globally around 1-2% of the general population have red hair, this rises to 2-6% in the Northern hemisphere and is highest in Scotland where as many as 13% are red heads with at least 40% carrying the recessive red hair gene.

Barry and colleagues say that there have been anecdotal reports about the clinical behaviour of red heads with claims of increased bleeding.

However, in their review of existing scientific literature on this issue, they found no robust evidence to support these anecdotes.

Some small studies found that when undergoing surgery people with red hair needed more anaesthetic than other patients. And another study indicated that red heads were more sensitive to cold and heat pain than the control group.

In conclusion, the authors say that red heads have no greater risk during surgery than the rest of the population.

Provided by British Medical Journal

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