

# New tool in the early detection of bowel disease

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An international team of researchers led by the University of East Anglia (UEA) have developed a new kind of endoscope to aid the early detection and diagnosis of inflammatory bowel disease.

The Confocal Laser Endomicroscope (CLE) contains a powerful microscope which allows clinicians to view the [bacteria](#) that are thought to trigger diseases of the bowel such as Crohn's disease and [ulcerative colitis](#).

"Bacteria within the wall of the gut are already believed to play an important role in the development of [inflammatory bowel disease](#) and we now have a powerful new tool for viewing this bacteria during routine colonoscopy," said Prof Alastair Watson of the University of East Anglia (UEA), who led the work in partnership with researchers in France and Germany.

"This new technique will allow the rapid identification of patients at risk or in the early stages of this common but distressing group of diseases."

The causes of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are still not completely understood but bacteria within the mucous membrane of the gut are thought to play a role. The current method of taking biopsies prevents observation of the bacteria's exact location and of the way it interacts with the mucous membrane. The new endomicroscopy technique, which uses a fluorescent dye to highlight the bacteria, allows these exact processes to be viewed at a sub-cellular level during routine

[colonoscopy](#).

Funded by the Wellcome Trust, the study also found that of 163 patients studied, those with Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis were much more likely to have bacteria within the wall of their gut than those with healthy intestines.

**More information:** [gut.bmj.com/content/early/2010 ...  
gut.2010.213264.full](http://gut.bmj.com/content/early/2010...gut.2010.213264.full)

Provided by University of East Anglia

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