

# Poor people more likely to view cancer as fatal

October 10 2011

---

(Medical Xpress) -- People in lower paid jobs are pessimistic about the benefits of diagnosing cancer early and more scared than affluent people to see a doctor about an unusual symptom, new research shows.

The Cancer Research UK-funded study, published in [Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention](#) today (Thursday), concluded that people from lower socio-economic backgrounds were more fatalistic about cancer.

Researchers interviewed over 2,000 British adults and analysed their attitudes towards early detection and seeing a doctor about worrying symptoms.

Overall, most people were realistic about [cancer survival](#) – believing that half of those diagnosed with cancer survive their disease for at least five years.

But people from the lowest socio-economic section of society were less likely to believe that cancer could be cured – on average they believed that only 26 per cent of people diagnosed with cancer survive their disease for at least five years.

Study author Dr. Rebecca Beeken from the Cancer Research UK Health Behavior Research Centre at University College London (UCL) said: “This study shows that people with lower socio-economic status may think it is less worthwhile to detect cancer early because they are more

fatalistic about the outcome.

“These differences in the way people perceive cancer could lead to inequalities in cancer survival.”

Only 10 per cent of respondents said they would be too frightened to see their doctor if they had a symptom that they thought might be cancer.

Among people in lower skilled jobs the percentage was 14 per cent compared with 6 per cent among people in managerial or professional jobs.

Sara Hiom, director of health information at Cancer Research UK, said: “We’ve witnessed huge improvements in cancer survival in recent decades, with UK survival doubling over the last 40 years. But we know that the most deprived patients are less likely to survive their cancer than the most affluent patients, which is a huge cause for concern.

“Reducing inequality in cancer survival is vital if we are to ensure the UK is comparable with the best survival rates in the world. This study suggests that addressing attitudes towards cancer in some of the poorest parts of society will play an important role in doing this.

“We are working to better understand the role that deprivation plays. We know that we need to encourage the adoption of healthy lifestyles and to diagnose all cancers as early as possible – by improving symptom awareness, encouraging prompt visits to the doctor, and by supporting GPs to appropriately refer patients. We also need to ensure that all patients have access to optimal treatment for their [cancer](#), regardless of where they live, their age and their economic circumstances.”

**More information:** Beeken R J et al., Cancer fatalism: deterring early presentation and increasing social inequalities?, *Cancer Epidemiology*,

*Biomarkers & Prevention* (2011)

[DOI: 10.1158/1055-9965.EPI-11-0437](https://doi.org/10.1158/1055-9965.EPI-11-0437)

Provided by Cancer Research UK

Citation: Poor people more likely to view cancer as fatal (2011, October 10) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-10-poor-people-view-cancer-fatal.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.