

# Poor men more likely to die from bowel cancer

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(Medical Xpress) -- Deprived men are more likely to die from bowel cancer than men from the most affluent section of society, new research presented at the NCRI Cancer Conference in Liverpool this week shows.

The study, funded by the NHS in Scotland<sup>1</sup>, found that a link between deprivation and bowel cancer deaths was mainly seen in [men](#) rather than women.

Bowel cancer includes both colon and rectal cancers – and researchers in Scotland found that, in addition to the effects of deprivation on bowel cancer deaths, deprived men were also at greater risk of developing rectal cancer.

Using data from the Scottish Cancer registry, researchers analysed the incidence rate and death rate for five different socio-economic sections of society from 2004 to 2009.<sup>2</sup>

The study looked at a total of around 12,000 colon cancer cases and more than 6,000 cases of rectal cancer.

Researchers said that the link between rates of rectal cancer in men and deprivation was a recent trend – one that has only become more evident since the mid-1990s.

While the relationship between bowel cancer mortality and deprivation is already well established – this study found that the link is stronger

among men.

Study author Professor Robert Steele, based at the University of Dundee, said: "People's knowledge of bowel cancer risks, screening uptake and lifestyles tend to differ depending on their socio-economic background – these factors may play an important role in why deprivation has more of an effect on men and is more apparent for rectal cancer.

"Bowel cancer is the third most common cancer in the UK - around 40,000 people are diagnosed with the disease each year. Most bowel cancers are in the large bowel (colon), with about 1 in 3 cancers in the rectum."

Alongside family history of bowel cancer and getting older, obesity and diets high in red and processed meat and low in fibre have an important influence on risk of bowel cancer.

Dr Jane Cope, director of the NCRI, said: "We know from previous studies that people from more deprived areas are more likely to smoke or to be very overweight. They are also less likely to be screened for bowel cancer or to be aware of the signs and symptoms of the disease contributing to later diagnosis and potentially to poorer outcomes.

"We need new approaches to address these disparities if we are to reduce inequality in cancer survival."

Hazel Nunn, head of health information at Cancer Research UK, said: "When it comes to [bowel cancer](#) people can help stack the odds in their favour by eating a diet high in fibre and low in red and processed meat, not smoking, cutting down on alcohol, maintaining a healthy bodyweight, keeping physically active and seeing a GP as soon as possible if they notice anything unusual about their body."

**More information:** Steele, P et al. – Associations between deprivation and colorectal cancer incidence and mortality in Scotland, NCRI conference 2011 ([Abstract](#))

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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