

Bridging the gap in treatment for older women with breast cancer

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Sheffield researchers are investigating ways to improve the treatment and survival rate of elderly patients diagnosed with breast cancer.

The pioneering programme has been awarded almost £2million by the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) to ensure [older women](#) are treated as effectively as younger women.

Professor Malcolm Reed and Lynda Wyld from the Department of Oncology at the University of Sheffield are leading the ground-breaking programme - working in close collaboration with Dr Karen Collins from the Centre for Health and Social Care Research at Sheffield Hallam University.

Every year, more than 13,000 women in the United Kingdom aged 70 years and over are diagnosed with [breast cancer](#), resulting in almost 7,000 deaths per year.

Whilst intensive research has resulted in significant improvements in the [treatment](#) and survival for younger women with breast cancer, this has not been the case for older women.

There is extensive evidence that older women are not always treated as effectively as younger women with the omission of treatments such as surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy in many cases.

This is based on misunderstandings of the impact of breast cancer on

[survival rates](#) in older women, the complications and side-effects of treatment and the preferences and perceptions these patients have of the disease and its treatment.

Lynda Wyld , Senior Lecturer in Surgical Oncology said: "The program will allow us to establish the most effective treatment for breast cancer in older patients tailored to their individual tumour characteristics and overall health.

"This will enable patients and their doctors to select the best treatment avoiding the common problem of under treatment but also that of overtreatment with the associated risk of side effects and loss of independence."

The research programme, which also involves colleagues from the University of Sheffield's School of Health and Related Research (ScHARR) and Cardiff University, will collect detailed information on the treatment and outcomes of a large national cohort of women with the aim of designing simple-to-use decision aids to help clinicians and patients decide on the most appropriate treatment.

Professor Malcolm Reed, Head of Surgical Oncology at the University of Sheffield said: "The award of a major programme grant funding from NIHR provides us with a superb opportunity to continue our work to improve the care in this previously under resourced area.

"We are pleased that NIHR have recognised the strength of the proposal and the partners at both Universities in Sheffield and other universities and hospitals in the UK.

"The research programme will receive funding for five years with the aim of producing benefits for [patients](#) in the NHS."

Provided by University of Sheffield

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