

Researchers undertake radical new cancer survivorship study

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Researchers from the Macmillan Survivorship Research Group (MSRG), at the University of Southampton, have developed the first study of its kind looking at the experiences and needs of people after primary treatment of colorectal cancer.

It is estimated that around two million people are living with, or beyond, [cancer](#) in the UK, with this figure rising by 3% each year. On average over 6,000 patients are diagnosed with cancer each year in Hampshire alone.

Whilst increasing cancer survival rates are to be celebrated, the experiences and needs of those who have completed their treatment have been relatively neglected until now.

The University of Southampton, which celebrates its 60th anniversary this year, has a long standing history of [cancer research](#). It has developed the ColoRECTal Wellbeing (CREW) study to look at a number of factors influencing recovery which takes into account the disease itself, the level of treatment patients receive, the support available to them and the range of [coping skills](#) they have.

Factors influencing recovery studied within the research include the time it takes a patient to return to feeling 'well', the length of time symptoms of treatment last and the range of things people can do to help return to 'normal' more quickly.

Results from this rigorous theory-informed study will, for the first time, inform [health care providers](#) and professionals across the country about what helps or hinders rapid and effective recovery and who has the confidence and ability to manage their own problems. It will also help identify areas for the development of interventions to aid the recovery process of those who may be at risk of experiencing problems.

More than 1,000 patients have been recruited to the study, one of whom is Susan Restorick-Banks from Totton in Hampshire.

Susan was diagnosed with a [tumour](#) in her colon in early 2011. She has endured Radiotherapy, surgery to remove the tumour and six months of [chemotherapy](#). She says: "It's been really important for me to participate in this study. By speaking out and giving my views, I feel I'm contributing to the wellbeing of future [cancer survivors](#) and it's really the only way researchers have of finding out how people like me cope.

"Whilst I've had a very supportive network around me, and have continued to enjoy life throughout my treatment, I know that other people going through cancer treatment can experience things very differently."

Colorectal cancer has been chosen as the focus for the study as it is one of the most treatable cancers in the UK. It affects both men and women equally and can involve all three forms of basic cancer treatment: surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

The participants, 187 of whom are from Southampton, will be followed over a two-year period establishing the natural history of the recovery of their health and [wellbeing](#) and assessing how quickly they recover after colorectal cancer.

Senior Research Fellow at the University of Southampton and chief

investigator for the research Dr Deborah Fenlon says: "Up until now the general focus for cancer research has been on cure and prevention for the disease. Macmillan is uniquely concerned with helping to improve the lives of people living with cancer, and for us it is absolutely imperative we understand the experiences of the two million cancer survivors in order to positively inform the professionals who interact and support these survivors, helping them get the best out of life once treatment is over."

Professor Jessica Corner, Dean of Health Sciences at the University of Southampton and Chief Clinician of Macmillan, says, "As a leading health sciences research-based Faculty, and the only research unit funded by Macmillan, we are extremely proud to be undertaking this radical new research. Our ultimate joint-aim is to help improve the lives of people with cancer by informing health care providers and professionals in practice which help care for the two million plus cancer survivors across the UK. Recruiting more than 1000 patients is a real milestone for the study and we are incredibly grateful to Susan and all those participating and involved in the research."

This study forms part of a trio of research projects being undertaken by [Health Sciences](#) researchers from the MSRG. Initial research was conducted into how people manage cancer and cancer-related problems followed by creating and testing an online intervention to support self-management.

Ciarán Devane, Chief Executive of Macmillan Cancer Support, says: "We are delighted to congratulate our Macmillan Survivorship Research Group in their recruitment of their 1,000th research participant to the CREW research study. Macmillan is committed to understanding and using evidence, to help the 2 million people living with cancer in the UK. Work with our academic colleagues is helping us to increase our knowledge and will allow us to develop our services in the future.

"The CREW study is important in helping us learn more about bowel cancer patients and their different needs after treatment. The information gained through research will help us support and improve the lives of the increasing numbers of people who are living with and beyond cancer."

Provided by University of Southampton

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