

Cancer prevalence set to treble

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(Medical Xpress) -- The number of older people (aged 65 and over) living with cancer in the UK is set to more than treble by 2040 – from 1.3 million in 2010 to 4.1 million – according to a new study by King's College London researchers.

The Macmillan-funded study, published in *The British Journal of [Cancer](#)*, shows nearly one in four (23 per cent) [older people](#) will have had a cancer diagnosis in 2040 – almost double the proportion in 2010 (13 per cent). This is nearly four times the proportion for people aged 45-64.

Lung cancer prevalence in older women will see the biggest increase. The prevalence of lung cancer in older women will more than double from in 2010 to 2040 (from 319 to 831 per 100, 000), whereas lung cancer prevalence in older men is expected to decrease. This is due to a dramatic decline in smoking among men in England since the 1970s.

The sharp rise in cancer prevalence is likely to be due to a number of reasons including the ageing population, increasing incidence and increasing cancer survival.

Professor Henrik Møller, one of the study authors at King's, says: 'The aim of this research is to provide long term projections of cancer prevalence in the UK. The research shows that large increases can be expected in the oldest age groups in the coming decades and with this an increased demand upon health services.'

Currently older [cancer patients](#) face a multitude of barriers to getting the best care and [treatment](#). These include under treatment, a lack of practical support at home preventing them from going to hospital to get treatment and poor management of non-cancer related health problems.

Ciarán Devane, Chief Executive at Macmillan Cancer Support, said: 'The care of older cancer patients is the ticking time bomb for society. These stark predictions should act as a warning to the NHS and social care providers of the problems ahead if older cancer patients are not offered the best treatment and support.'

'We have a moral duty to give people the best chance of beating cancer, regardless of their age. For cancer survival to improve, older people must be given the right treatment at the correct level of intensity, together with the practical support to enable them to take it up.'

'The barriers to older people getting treatment must be tackled. If we don't get this right now many older people will be dying unnecessarily from cancer in the future.'

Macmillan is calling for a more effective way of assessing older people for treatment, more short-term practical support to enable them to take up recommended treatment and training for professionals working with

older people within the NHS to promote age equality.

Macmillan, in partnership with Age UK and the Department of Health, has set up five pilots to test new models of older people's care. They will report in December 2012.

More information: Maddams J, Utley M and Møller H. 2012. 'Projections of cancer prevalence in the United Kingdom, 2010–2040'. *British Journal of Cancer*. www.nature.com/bjc/journal/vaol113/n11/ull/bjc2012366a.html

Provided by King's College London

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