

Study supports tobacco link to ovarian cancer

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A major outcome was evidence to support smoking's link to the disease, which until recently had not been considered a risk factor. Image: Micke Jakobsson

(Medical Xpress)—Researchers from Curtin University's School of Public Health have contributed to a comprehensive international study examining risk factors for ovarian cancer.

Prof Andy Lee and Prof Colin Binns took part as members of the Collaborative Group on [Epidemiological Studies](#) of [Ovarian Cancer](#) based at Oxford University and funded by UK [Cancer research](#).

Their work involved the completion of two studies in China, which were fed into a pool of data totalling 28,114 women with, and 94,942 women without, ovarian cancer.

The aim of the project was to gather and analyse [epidemiological](#)

[evidence](#) from published and unpublished sources which could shed light on the second most commonly diagnosed gynaecological cancer in Australia, one which Cancer Australia lists as having a five-year survival rate of only 40 per cent.

A major outcome was evidence to support smoking's link to the disease, which until recently had not been considered a risk factor.

"Previously there was only a weak link between smoking and ovarian cancer, coming from a paper in 2009. This new analysis firmly establishes that relationship for one particular type of ovarian cancer, mucinoid tumours, which account for about 15 per cent of the total of all ovarian cancers," Prof Binns says.

Interestingly, increased smoking-related occurrences of mucinoid tumours showed up primarily in borderline malignant tumours with no significant association with those fully malignant. Occurrences of other types of ovarian cancers showed no significant differences between current smokers and those who had never lit up.

Outcomes were consistent along 13 socio-demographic and [personal characteristics](#) which were taken into account, including body-mass index, use of alcohol, use of [oral contraceptives](#) and menopausal hormone therapy.

Prof Binns says more research was needed to understand how smoking stimulated the creation of mucinoid tumours, but stressed the first step in prevention was for women to quit cigarettes.

"While giving up smoking is the best advice, we did find evidence that drinking green tea, breastfeeding, eating fruit and vegetables, getting regular exercise and avoiding obesity were also beneficial," he says.

Prof Binns says the study was a step forward and reflected well the quality of work being done at Curtin University.

"We are very proud that the work of the School of Public Health is world class and can be included in this collaborative effort with other top universities from around the world," he says.

More information: 'Ovarian cancer and smoking: individual participant meta-analysis including 28,114 women with ovarian cancer from 51 epidemiological studies' appears in *The Lancet Oncology* volume 13, issue 9.

Provided by Curtin University

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