

Life saving surgical technique to be pioneered in Yorkshire

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A surgical technique which could save the lives of 3,000 colon cancer patients every year will be taught to Yorkshire's surgeons this week in a bid to improve outcomes.

Researchers at the Leeds Institute of Molecular Medicine, part of the University of Leeds' School of Medicine, have spent the past 15 years studying photographic records of bowel [cancer tumours](#) removed in the city and around the world in order to compare different types of surgery and how they relate to curing [bowel cancer](#) patients.

Initial research into tumours located in the rectum, undertaken by Professor Phil Quirke, led to two training programmes for rectal [cancer surgery](#) involving 200 English NHS hospitals. Following further research into tumours located in the colon by Dr Nick West and Professor Quirke, the team will now trial a new training programme in Yorkshire – the first of its kind in the county. If the course, funded by Yorkshire Cancer Research, is successful, it could be rolled out across the UK.

There are 25,000 cases of colon cancer diagnosed in the country each year, and while survival rates for both colon and rectal cancer are slowly improving, colon cancer now has the worst prognosis and the programme aims to change this. New studies by Dr Eva Morris, also from the University of Leeds, have shown a wide variation not only in cure rates but also in death rates after surgery, and her findings will be presented during the two-day course.

Professor Quirke said: "There is wide variation in outcomes for patients with colon cancer across the UK and beyond. Previous studies have shown that by standardising surgery and removing much more tissue surrounding the tumour and ensuring that the specimen removed is more intact, the chance of survival can be increased by 15%.

"Yorkshire currently sits in the middle of the field for outcomes in colon cancer. We would like to improve our position so that we become one of the best in England. We are bringing global leaders in the area to Leeds to share their experiences with surgeons and pathologists and see if we can benefit from their work."

The course will include a presentation by Professor Werner Hohenberger, who is based in Erlangen, Germany, where survival rates are 20% higher than in the UK. Following studies on surgical specimens from Leeds, Dr West compared them to samples from Erlangen, Japan and Denmark and discovered major differences between surgeons and centres.

A training programme based on Hohenberger's technique was recently implemented in Denmark, which has the highest mortality rate for the disease in Western Europe. Based on Dr West's findings, the Danish health authorities carried out a complete retraining of all teams involved in bowel cancer treatment, and although it will be another three years before the impact on five year survival rates is known, the programme proved that clinical practice could be altered through training.

Surgeons from Hillerod Hospital in Denmark and Karolinska University Hospital in Stockholm, who have adopted the technique, will also present as part of the course.

Professor Quirke added: "If we can convince Yorkshire's surgeons to focus on [colon cancer](#) and pioneer these techniques, we will then be able

to go to the English NHS with conclusive data from both Denmark and Yorkshire and show them that surgical education could have a major impact on [survival rates](#) in this country and beyond. If every surgeon in the UK took up this technique, we estimate that 3,000 lives could be saved every year. We wish to ensure that the latest techniques are brought Yorkshire to the benefit Yorkshire patients and ultimately patients elsewhere and thanks to Yorkshire Cancer Research we are able to do so."

Provided by Yorkshire Cancer Research

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