

Eight in 10 now survive skin cancer

July 22 2013

(Medical Xpress)—More than eight out of 10 people diagnosed with malignant melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer, will now survive the disease, compared to only around five in 10 in the early 70s, according to a new report from Cancer Research UK.

Ten year survival has reached 80 per cent in men and 90 per cent in women, compared to 38 per cent in men and 58 per cent in women 40 years ago. The improvements in [survival](#) are likely to be down to improvements in treatment, early [diagnosis](#) and awareness of the symptoms.

Nearly 13,000 cases of melanoma are diagnosed each year in the UK, that's around 35 people every day.

Professor Richard Marais, director of the Cancer Research UK Paterson Institute for Cancer Research based at the University of Manchester, said: "Forty years ago, only around half of those diagnosed with [skin cancer](#) were surviving, so eight out of 10 is a massive improvement. More and more people are beating skin cancer but we can't stop there and we need to develop better treatments for the two out of 10 where things don't look so good.

"Obviously we've come a long way in the fight against skin cancer and that's largely down to the [generosity](#) of supporters who have funded research to help us to understand the disease better and find new ways of beating it. Research funded by Cancer Research UK has underpinned the development of new drugs like vemurafenib. Although these drugs do

not cure skin cancers, they can give patients with advanced melanoma valuable extra months and show the progress we are making."

Dr Harpal Kumar, Cancer Research UK's chief executive, said: "Our research is revealing more about skin cancer: what causes it, how we can better prevent it and how we can develop targeted treatments to help more people beat the disease. By funding more research we can bring forward the day when even more people survive.

"Cancer Research UK research was behind the discovery that faults in a gene called BRAF contribute to over half of all cases of [melanoma](#). Since then, our scientists have led efforts to develop drugs that target this gene.

"Skin cancer is one of the fastest rising cancers in the UK, which is likely to be down to our sunbathing habits and the introduction of cheap package holidays in previous decades. But the earlier cancer is detected, the easier it is to treat it and the more likely the treatment is to be successful. That's why it's important to get to know your skin and if you notice anything unusual, such as a change to a mole or a blemish that still hasn't healed after a few weeks, then get it checked out by your GP."

More information: www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/types/skin/

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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