

Colon cancer survivors are more likely to have pain in the back and abdomen

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Manuel Arroyo-Morales. Credit: UGRdivulga

Researchers from the University of Granada have discovered that colon cancer survivors are more likely to suffer future lesions related with pain in the back and lower abdomen than healthy individuals of the same gender and age.

These patients present a series of abnormalities in the abdominal wall architecture—the site of surgery in oncological treatment. Moreover, they have specific abnormalities in processing [chronic pain](#) that may

increase their sensitization to any kind of pain in the future.

In two articles published in *Pain Medicine* and the *European Journal of Cancer Care*, University of Granada researchers from the Department of Physical Therapy analyse the physical and [psychological status](#) of colon cancer patients following oncological treatment. The study—funded by the Campus of International Excellence: BioHealth and Information & Communications Technology (CEI BioTic)—was conducted in collaboration with researchers from the Department of Surgery of the Hospital Clínico San Cecilio, Granada.

Third most frequent type of cancer

As principal author, Manuel Arroyo-Morales explains, "colon cancer is the third most common cancer in the world if we consider both genders together. Thanks to advances in oncological treatment, the chances of survival have risen spectacularly in recent years—between 44% and 65% in the last 5 years. This improvement in treatment has led to the appearance of a group of people who have had cancer and have managed to overcome it".

However, oncological treatment is extremely tough physically and highly traumatic psychologically. "The fact that this group of wrongly termed 'cancer survivors' should be growing leads us to ask what price they have to pay for their survival", says this University of Granada researcher.

The results indicate that when we compare these patients with individuals of a similar age and gender, we find that colon [cancer survivors](#) present a substantial deterioration of their functional capacity—that is, their capacity to lead normal daily work and leisure routines.

Loss of strength

This deterioration in functional capacity is due to their loss of physical condition because of physical rest during the treatment and convalescence that they have to undergo for several months. "The loss of parameters like muscle strength in the back or cardiorespiratory capacity can mean up to a 60% deterioration by comparison with healthy individuals of the same gender and age".

At the same time, colon cancer patients have symptoms like fatigue or moderate tiredness due to the illness itself. "All these physical abnormalities impact on their quality of life to the extent that this can be reduced by around 40% when compared with individuals of the same age and gender not affected by cancer", says Arroyo.

The University of Granada research group's next objective is to conduct physiotherapy programmes aimed at improving these physical issues and, thus, help [colon cancer](#) patients regain quality of life.

Provided by University of Granada

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