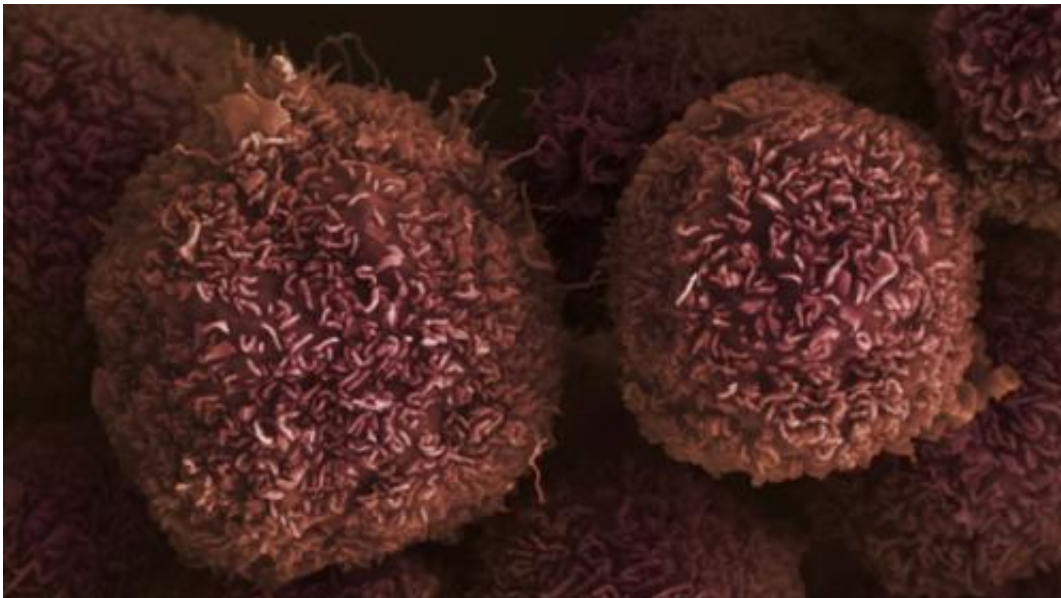


Four in 10 pancreatic cancers could be prevented by lifestyle changes

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(Medical Xpress)—Almost 40 per cent of pancreatic cancers – one of the deadliest forms of cancer – could be avoided in the UK through maintaining a healthy weight and not smoking according to Cancer Research UK, in a call to arms against the disease.

Every year 8,800 people are diagnosed with the disease in the UK but [survival rates](#) remain very low, with only three per cent of people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer surviving their disease for five years or

more after their diagnosis.

Cancer Research UK has made pancreatic cancer research a priority, and has the bold ambition to more than double its annual spend of £6million on research into the disease over the next five years. The charity is investing in fundamental biology investigating how the cancer spreads as well as trials looking at boosting the effectiveness of the standard chemotherapy treatments in pancreatic cancer patients.

While more research is needed to find better ways of diagnosing and treating the disease, there is evidence to suggest that some pancreatic cancers are linked to being overweight and to smoking – and almost four in 10 could be prevented by lifestyle changes to address this.

Sara Hiom, Cancer Research UK's director of early diagnosis, said: "Cancer is a complex set of diseases. For some, lifestyle can play an important role, and is one aspect of the disease that we have some control over. Pancreatic cancer is a disease with poor outcomes and is less well understood, so it's important that we talk about the things people can do to stack the odds in their favour and reduce their risk."

Professor Jeff Evans, a clinician and researcher at Cancer Research UK's Beatson Institute in Glasgow, said: "As a clinician it's devastating when I have to tell a patient with advanced pancreatic cancer that there are limited treatment options that can help them.

"Survival for this disease remains shockingly low and this has to change. There's an urgent need to tackle pancreatic cancer head on by building up an armoury of effective new treatments – and developing ways to diagnose this disease sooner, when surgery is more effective.

"At the same time it's important to remember that people can take steps to reduce their risk of developing pancreatic and other cancers, by not

smoking and by keeping a [healthy weight](#) – especially if you are prone to carrying too much around your middle.

"Keeping physically active and cutting down on red meat may also help reduce the risk."

Richie Birch, 55, from North Wales said: "I'm one of the lucky ones. This disease claimed my mother's life but I'm still here five years after I was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Most people are not so lucky, which is why we need to shine a spotlight on pancreatic cancer research.

"My mother smoked until the day she died and I used to smoke too, but we don't know if it was the cause. Now, I would definitely urge people not to smoke and to be more healthy with their diet and exercise. It's so important to be aware and do everything you can."

Harpal Kumar, Cancer Research UK's chief executive, said: "Pancreatic cancer is rarely in the spotlight. Unlike most other cancers where we've seen survival rates climb, outcomes for pancreatic cancer remain desperately poor. This is why Cancer Research UK has made this terrible disease a research priority in our recent strategy, and we plan to more than double the amount we spend on [pancreatic cancer](#) research over the next few years.

"There is a long way to go, so we intend to move quickly to ensure that we make as rapid progress as possible in fighting this devastating disease."

More information: Parkin DM, Boyd L, Walker LC. 16. "The fraction of cancer attributable to lifestyle and environmental factors in the UK in 2010: Summary and conclusions." *British Journal of Cancer* 2011;105:S77–S81.

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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