

Pancreatic survival rates at standstill for four decades

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Long-term survival from pancreatic cancer has failed to improve in 40 years – with the outlook remaining the lowest of the 21 most common cancers, according to new figures published by Cancer Research UK today.

Today just over three per cent of [pancreatic cancer](#) patients survive for at least five years, only a fraction more than the two per cent who survived that long in the early 1970s.

Across all cancers, half of patients now survive at least twice that long. But most cases of pancreatic cancer go undetected until it is too late for surgery. And with the lack of effective tests and treatments for the disease, the majority of patients still die within a year.

But Cancer Research UK is planning to more than double its £6 million annual research spend on [pancreas cancer](#) within five years, making inroads into an area of research that until now has been globally neglected. The disease is now under the spotlight across the charity's five institutes nationwide.

Professor Andrew Biankin is among the three quarters of scientists at Cancer Research UK's Beatson Institute at the University of Glasgow who are contributing to pancreatic cancer research.

He said: "Pancreatic cancer has very few symptoms at first and I see far too many patients who, out of the blue, are told they may have just

months or even weeks to live. We've been waiting too long for new drugs to treat the disease and there are very few options available for people with advanced forms of the disease. It's a situation that simply has to change and we can only do that by funding more high quality research and trials, to get treatments out of the lab and into patients as soon as possible."

Working with Professor Sean Grimmond, Professor Biankin is leading a team of researchers studying the unique pattern of faults in tumour samples from 400 pancreatic cancer patients and comparing this to their treatment and outcomes to create a map that will help guide the treatment of future patients.

They're also trying to identify molecules that could be used as early warning signs for the disease, to help diagnose patients before their cancer becomes too advanced.

Yasmin, 41, from London, lost her father Shaukat to pancreatic cancer in 2008. She said: "I lost my dad just 18 months after he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. I don't want other families to go through what we did.

"The more research we do, the more chances we have to find cures. Progress is being made but it's hard to cope with the fact that it couldn't help dad. By the time pancreatic cancer is diagnosed, it's often too late for treatment to work.

"I miss my dad every day. Life changes around you, things go on, but I'm always aware there's somebody missing."

Pancreatic cancer is the tenth most common cancer in the UK. Every year, around 8,800 people are diagnosed with the disease and around 8,300 die from it.

Harpal Kumar, Cancer Research UK's chief executive, said: "It's shocking that so many patients are still losing their lives to pancreatic cancer, which is why we've made it a priority to ignite a new wave of research that will see the disease detected earlier and much needed treatments getting to patients sooner.

"Overall, more than half of all [cancer patients](#) now survive at least a decade, which is testament to the power of research to transform people's lives. But disappointingly, we are nowhere near that level with pancreas cancer, and we won't stop until we can bring those kinds of results to all patients, regardless of their [cancer type](#)."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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