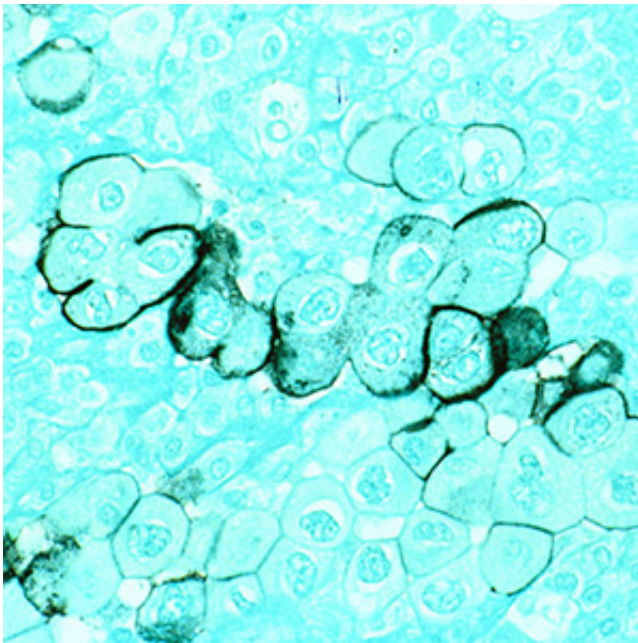


# New biomarkers to spot pancreatic cancer early

February 5 2015

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Pancreatic cancer could be diagnosed up to two years earlier by screening for two tumour markers found in blood, according to research published in *Clinical Cancer Research*.

The study, conducted by researchers from UCL, UCL Hospital Foundation Trust and the University of Liverpool, suggests that these biomarkers could be used as an early screening tool for those at high risk of pancreatic [cancer](#).

Led by Dr John Timms (UCL Women's Cancer) and Dr Stephen Pereira (UCL Liver & Digestive Health), the researchers used [blood](#) samples taken from patients before the appearance of symptoms to test for four key markers.

When used in combination, two of these markers, CA19-9 and CA125, were identified as being sensitive enough to detect pancreatic cancer up to two years before clinical presentation.

Although previous research has found increased levels of the biomarker CA19-9 close to disease presentation, this is the first study to find increased levels present in the early stages of pancreatic cancer.

When screened for on its own, CA19-9 can give false positive results as increased levels are also found in those suffering from benign diseases such as pancreatitis and obstructive jaundice. However, the study found that also screening for CA125 improved the sensitivity of detecting pre-clinical pancreatic cancer.

Dr Timms said: "We have for the first time assessed these biomarkers in unique serum samples taken months to years prior to the clinical diagnosis of pancreatic cancer that were sourced from the UK Collaborative Trial of Ovarian Cancer Screening (UKCTOCS). The work challenges the prevailing view that CA19-9 is up-regulated late in the course of [pancreatic cancer](#) development and suggests its potential for [screening](#) in high-risk groups, particularly if used longitudinally."

Commenting on the future of the research Dr Pereira said: "Plans are now underway with London Cancer to set up pilot Multidisciplinary Diagnostic Centres for specialist triage and to enhance straight to test pathways with primary care, combining risk assessment and symptom tools with [biomarkers](#) to hopefully improve early cancer diagnosis for patients."

**More information:** "Serum CA19-9 is significantly up-regulated up to 2 years prior to diagnosis with pancreatic cancer: implications for early disease detection." *Clin Cancer Res* clincanres.0365.2014; Published OnlineFirst June 17, 2014; [DOI: 10.1158/1078-0432.CCR-14-0365](https://doi.org/10.1158/1078-0432.CCR-14-0365)

Provided by University College London

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