

The potential consequences for cancer care and cancer research of Brexit

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In an editorial to be published on Friday 24 February 2017 in the journal *ecancermedicalsecience*, leading academics from across the UK explore the risks facing cancer care, treatment and research in a post-Brexit world.

The editorial is written by 6 doctors who represent [cancer](#) physicians, patient advocacy groups and genomics research (and includes Nobel Prize winner Sir Paul Nurse). The group is calling for Brexit negotiations to consider how UK groups continue to play an active role in cross continental projects, how UK Institutions are able to attract and keep international staff and how to handle regulatory issues going forward.

The authors write. "We need to take every opportunity to remind the UK government that cancer patients and [cancer research](#) could be significantly disadvantaged, unless great care is deployed in the negotiations of the legal and economic frameworks governing the UK's relationship with the EU beyond Brexit."

One of the lead authors, Professor Mark Lawler, Chair of Translational Cancer Genomics, Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology, Queen's University Belfast and Vice President for Research and Innovation, European Cancer Concord, describes some of the uncertainties for British cancer research: "Research is no longer an ivory tower silo-type pursuit - collaboration is the key. UK scientists contribute enormously to the European research effort while having scientists from different countries within our research institutions and

hospitals greatly supports our battle against cancer."

In the aftermath of the referendum, the group is calling for consideration of the regulatory and organizational issues facing cancer research and patient care.

Prof Lawler notes "[The group] have previously expressed lack of confidence that if [EU regulations] were lost as a result of leaving they may not be replaced by UK government. This particularly affects manufacturers of medical devices and tests unless the EU and the UK are able to share regulatory frameworks to allow ready import and export of such devices/tests."

The paper describes how uncertainty about research funding is discouraging senior researchers from relocating to the UK (although no studies have been published yet).

The editorial also highlights the key issue of how sensitive patient data is handled between the EU and the UK.

The authors note that some consideration for the role of UK research, especially in bioscience, has been part of planning so far, but that the future is far from certain.

"Some reassurance has been offered. But will the UK Government continue to fund researchers who have previously been able to compete for European grants? - that is the key question that needs to be answered." Prof Lawler added.

The authors conclude that "If when the Brexit negotiations are complete the UK government doesn't step up to fill the gaps in law, regulation, resource allocation and strategic alliances, cancer research and [cancer patients](#) will suffer."

More information: Peter Selby et al, The Consequences for Cancer Care and Cancer Research of Brexit, *ecancermedicalsience* (2017). [DOI: 10.3332/ecancer.2017.ed63](https://doi.org/10.3332/ecancer.2017.ed63)

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