

Scientists and patient volunteers reunite after 12 years for new study

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Patients who took part in research into bowel health more than a decade ago have reunited for a follow-up study to help experts gain a better understanding into the risks of bowel cancer.

Bowel problems are common and lifestyle factors, such as diet and [physical activity](#), are known to be key in the development of conditions affecting the large [bowel](#), such as [cancer](#) and ulcerative colitis.

Ageing is a significant factor and scientists at Newcastle University are revisiting a study to look at what effect this has on cells in the large bowel and whether these are influenced by lifestyle choices.

The Biomarkers Of Risk In Colorectal Cancer (BORICC) follow-up study—called BFU—aims to enhance understanding of the relationship between ageing, diet, physical activity and health of the bowel.

The initial study was set up by Newcastle University in 2005 and involves Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. The BFU study will again look at [bowel cancer](#) risk but also at how well we age.

Health markers

John Mathers, Professor of Human Nutrition and Director of the Human Nutrition Research Centre, Newcastle University, is leading the three-year project.

Professor Mathers said: "I am delighted that the wonderful people who joined our research study as participants 12 years ago are willing to come back and help again.

"This follow-up study will enable us to find out how what we measured all those years ago can tell us about markers of health now."

The first BORICC study had 363 participants and it is hoped that a high number of those involved will take part in the new project by responding to invitation letters from the research team.

In the original study scientists found that diet and body fatness affect certain proteins and genes in the cells of the large bowel.

Researchers will investigate how being overweight at the start of the original study, or gaining weight in the meantime, affects how well people age and the impact on their health and bowel cancer risk.

Data collection

Additional data will be collected from the previous study, such as physical activity levels obtained by a wrist-worn physical activity monitor, and physical capability data sourced from muscle function tests.

Participants will be required to complete questionnaires and provide their medical history, as well as body measurements, blood samples, inner cheek swab and small samples of tissues from the bowel.

Mike Bradburn, Consultant Colorectal Surgeon at Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, is part of the research team.

He said: "This new study is exciting and unique as we are again analysing

the bowel health of individuals we studied more than a decade ago – this has not been done before.

"This is a perfect way to investigate factors that change over time and can be identified as being potential risk factors for bowel cancer.

"We have had a positive response from people willing to take part in this study and it is great Newcastle University and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust are working together on this."

Grandfather-of-three Brian Rutherford, 62, of Cramlington, Northumberland, is keen to be involved in the follow-up study to help progress research into bowel cancer.

The retired IT project manager said: "It is exciting to be involved in this study as it'll allow experts to gain a better understanding into the impact bowel health has on cancer risk and the ageing process.

"I was delighted to find out that a follow-up study was being undertaken and that the information participants provide will hopefully help future generations.

"As people age bowel cancer becomes more of a concern so studies such as BFU are essential."

Those who take part in the study will be given the opportunity to get professional feedback on their diet and lifestyle.

Kenny Langlands, 71, of Blyth, Northumberland, hopes to be part of the new study.

The retired insurance agent said: "I think it's fantastic that a follow-up study is being done and I'm more than happy to take part to help

progress research into bowel health and cancer risk.

"I hope as many people as possible from the original study agree to be involved so as much patient information as possible can be obtained for the experts to analyse.

"It is great that Newcastle University and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust are leading the way. This study will hopefully help people age well and live long, healthy lives in the future."

Provided by Newcastle University

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