Experts call for a targeted approach to cancer prevention

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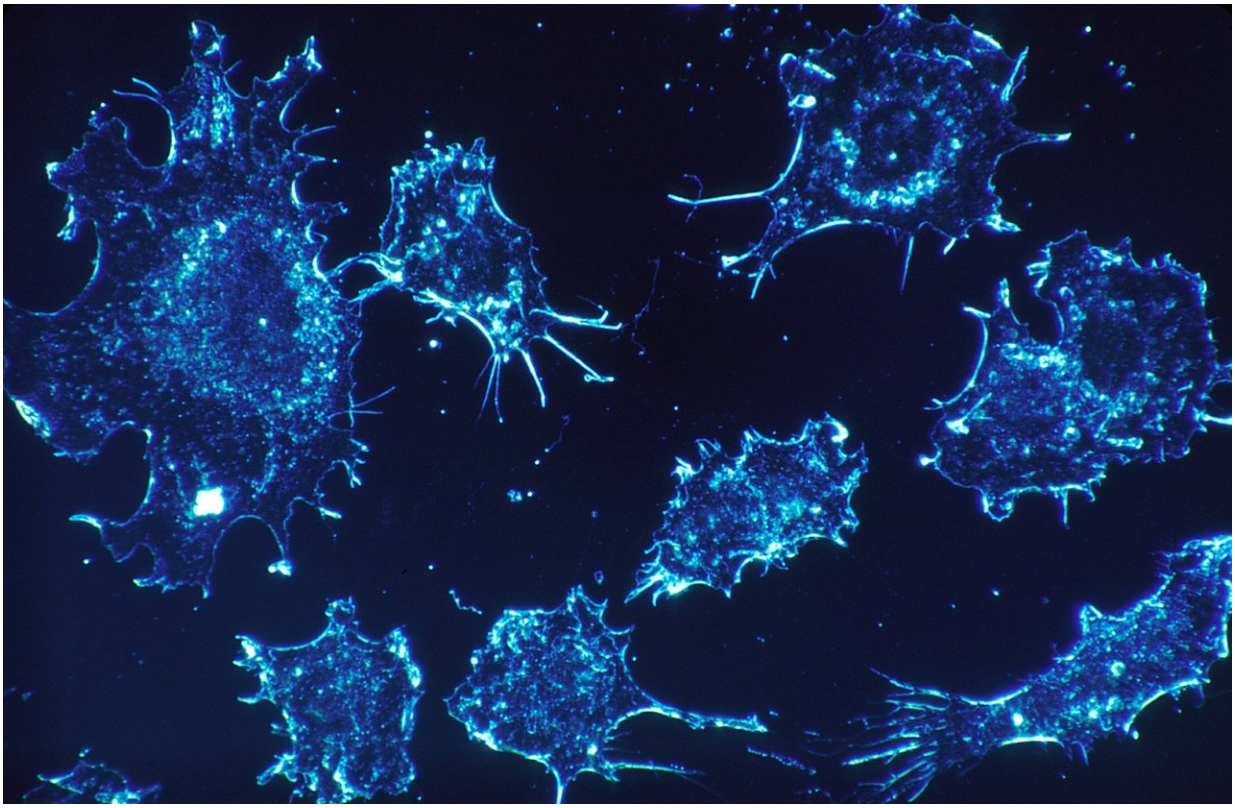

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Policymakers around the world should consider introducing more targeted early interventions in a bid to tackle cancer, according to experts at the University of Stirling.

A new paper – published in the *International Journal of Healthcare Policy* – analysed data from 162 countries to examine the relationship between economic growth and cancer incidence.

Dr. Bryan McIntosh, of the Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport, said the findings suggest that decision-makers should consider the socioeconomic circumstances of an area, or group of people, rather than follow a prescriptive method, when establishing the best point for early intervention.

Dr. McIntosh – who worked on the research with Stirling colleague, Dr. Susanne Cruickshank, and Dr. Michael Fascia, of Edinburgh Napier University and the University of Oxford – said: "Early intervention is a vital component in tackling cancer, as an early diagnosis provides patients with the best chance of full recovery and, in turn, improve mortality rates.

"However, establishing the best point for early intervention is a complex issue with policymakers tending to favour a prescriptive model, which doesn't work well in all circumstances.

"Our research considered the relationship between real per capita income and cancer incidences – specifically the effect of age and lifestyle.

"The findings suggest that decision-makers should adopt a more sophisticated model when it comes to planning early intervention initiatives, taking into consideration certain groups' predispositions to cancer and their socioeconomic circumstances."

The team used data from the World Bank and the World Health Organisation to develop an empirical analysis of the relationship between economic growth and cancer incidence.

The statistics show that, for many countries, the number of cancer cases increases in line with economic growth, as people live longer. However, in countries where this is not the case, people still die as young as they did previously.

In addition, the statistics reflect that poorer people have a greater likelihood of developing certain types of cancer.

Dr. McIntosh added: "Describing and measuring the relationship between cancer incidence and real per capita income constitutes the first step in understanding how the process of economic growth affects population exposure to cancer-causing factors.

"Further research is needed to include more variables, other than real per capita income, for example, those referring to personal income distribution, cultural habits and customs, general sanitary conditions and health policies.

"This paper, however, highlights some basic empirical regularities and theoretical insights that may be useful in developing an economic theory of the evolution of cancer incidence in a growing economy."

Dr. Cruickshank will discuss the findings, as part of a presentation on multi-morbidity and cancer outcomes, at the Scottish Oncology Summit, in Dunblane, this week.

The paper, "Dismay and disparities – economic development and cancer incidence," is published in the *International Journal of Healthcare Policy*.

More information: Dismay and disparities – economic development and cancer incidence (Forthcoming). *International Journal of Healthcare Policy*. www.inderscience.com/info/inge … oming.php?jcode=ijhp.

Provided by University of Stirling