

Diverticular disease associated with cancer outside gastrointestinal tract

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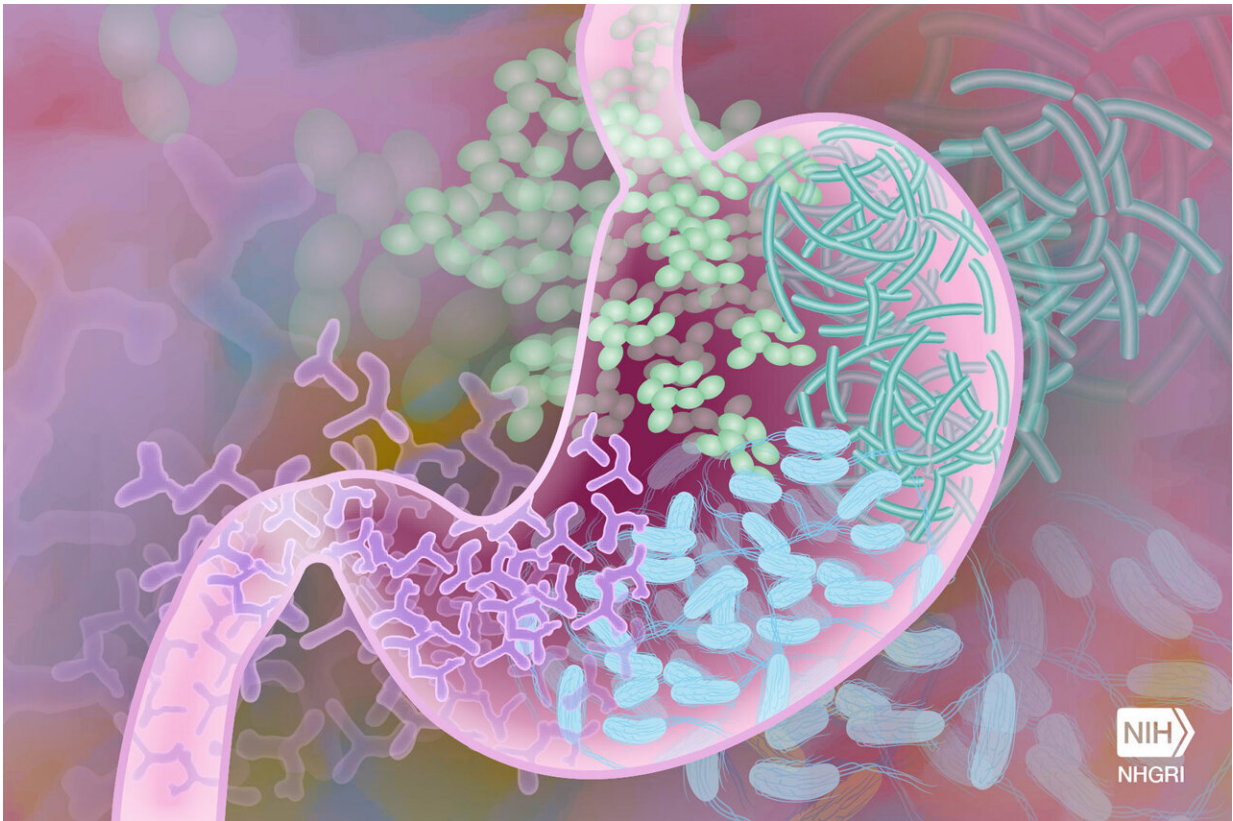


Illustration of bacteria in the human gut. Credit: Darryl Leja, National Human Genome Research Institute, National Institutes of Health

Through the ESPRESSO cohort, researchers from Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, University of Newcastle, Australia, University

of Washington, Seattle, and Karolinska Institutet examined the risk of cancer among 75,000 patients with a diagnosis of diverticular disease and colorectal histopathology. The paper is now published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*.

The ESPRESSO cohort covers all histopathology reports from Sweden's 28 pathology departments. Through linkage with the Swedish national patient register, researchers identified patients with diverticular disease.

Diverticular disease can present through [gastrointestinal bleeding](#), but also through diverticulitis when patients may have fever, nausea and abdominal pain. Previous research has focused on [colorectal cancer](#) development in diverticular disease but less has been known about [cancer development](#) elsewhere. The researchers found a 33% increased risk of overall cancer in Swedish patients with diverticular disease.

"This is the first nationwide cohort study to demonstrate that diverticular disease is associated with an increased, long-term risk of overall cancer," says first-author Wenjie Ma from Massachusetts General Hospital.

"Diverticular disease is associated with an increased risk of specific cancers, including [liver cancer](#) and [lung cancer](#)."

She also adds that "given the high prevalence of diverticular disease, our results highlight the need for awareness for cancer, not only for colorectal cancer, in patients with diverticular disease."

Patients with diverticular disease had significantly increased overall cancer incidence (24.5 vs. 18.1 cancer cases per 1,000 person-years). After adjusting for covariates, these rates corresponded to 1 extra cancer case in 16 individuals with diverticular disease followed for ten years.

"There has been a lot of research on extraintestinal cancer in other bowel disorders such as [inflammatory bowel disease](#) (IBD) and celiac disease,

but less is known about diverticular disease," says senior author Jonas F Ludvigsson, pediatrician at Örebro University Hospital and professor at the Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Karolinska Institutet.

"These data suggest that patients with diverticular disease are at increased risk of other cancers than colorectal cancer, but it should also be emphasized that the absolute risk for cancer was moderate," adds Ludvigsson. "I hope other researchers are inspired by our findings and explore the biological mechanisms underlying the association between diverticular disease and cancer," he concludes.

More information: Wenjie Ma et al, Cancer risk in patients with diverticular disease: a nationwide cohort study. *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* (2022). [DOI: 10.1093/jnci/djac190](https://doi.org/10.1093/jnci/djac190). pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36200887/

Provided by Karolinska Institutet

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