

Major increase in bowel cancer screening uptake shown with new screening test

March 27 2015



A large pilot study of a new bowel cancer screening test has demonstrated a major increase in participation rates across population groups.

This new data is being presented by Bowel Cancer Screening Hubs and Queen Mary University of London at Cancer Research UK's early diagnosis conference in London today (Friday).

The new test is called a Faecal Immunochemical Test or FIT for short.

In addition to being able to detect many more cancers and pre-cancers, the pilot of FIT in 40,000 people in the northwest, midlands and the south of England showed almost double the uptake with FIT than with the current test (guaiac faecal occult blood test or gFOBt) for those who had previously chosen not to participate (14.5 per cent climbed to 25.6 per cent).

Marked improvement in uptake was also observed in 60 year olds invited for the first time – an increase from 54.4 per cent to 63.9 per cent. For men of all ages there was an uplift from 57 per cent to 65.5 per cent participation.

The authors also showed improvement in uptake across the socioeconomic spectrum with as great an overall increase amongst the 'hard to reach' deprived population as among the least deprived.

The new test only requires one stool sample while three are required for the current gFOBt. FIT uses a simple and cleaner sampling technique and comes in an easy-return postal package.

The new screening test eliminates potential dietary interference and can measure very low concentrations of stool blood from bleeding colon cancers and pre-cancers.

Scotland have recently committed to the adoption of FIT and it is also recommended in the European Guideline for [colorectal cancer screening](#).

Sara Hiom, Cancer Research UK's director of early diagnosis, said:
"These results provide real encouragement that FIT can further improve our ability to increase screening uptake and detect bowel cancer early."

Cancer Research UK recommends that each nation's bowel screening programme should combine Bowel Scope Screening - also known as flexible sigmoidoscopy - with FIT. We know that Scotland has already committed to upgrading their screening programme, and we urge the other UK nations to do the same without delay."

Deborah Alsina, chief executive, Bowel Cancer UK: "Currently only around half of those invited take part in the NHS bowel cancer screening programme, meaning opportunities to detect cancer early are being lost. These exciting results clearly show that introducing the FIT test as part of the screening programme could help address that. Both by increasing participation and detecting more bowel cancers. We therefore urge England, Wales and Northern Ireland to follow Scotland's lead and rapidly commit to implementation. It will save lives and help us stop bowel cancer."

More information: "A faecal immunochemical test for haemoglobin (FIT) markedly increased participation in a colorectal cancer screening pilot in England." Sue Moss, Christopher Mathews, TJ Day, Steve Smith and Stephen P. Halloran

Provided by Cancer Research UK

Citation: Major increase in bowel cancer screening uptake shown with new screening test (2015, March 27) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-03-major-bowel-cancer-screening-uptake.html>

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