

Dramatic increase in bowel cancer in young adults in England

10 March 2020



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

There has been a dramatic increase in the incidence of bowel cancer in adults under the age of 50, according to new research from the University of Bristol, UWE Bristol and University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust (UH Bristol).

Using NHS patient data from the last 40 years, the research led by Adam Chambers at the University of Bristol and UH Bristol, looked at more than 55,000 cases of colorectal (bowel) [cancer](#) over 40 years in England.

Adam Chambers, Honorary Senior Research Associate in the School of Cellular and Molecular Medicine at the University of Bristol and Colorectal Registrar at UH Bristol, said: "Age has always been a major risk factor for bowel cancer, with the majority of cases being diagnosed in patients over 60 and therefore bowel cancer screening has focused on older age groups. However, this study shows that over the past 30 years, there has been an exponential increase in the incidence of bowel cancer among adults under 50."

The research, published in the *British Journal of Surgery* (BJS), describes in detail the demographic changes in colorectal cancer incidence among this younger population.

The study highlights that the increase in bowel cancer incidence in [young people](#) is predominantly driven by an increase in tumors of the lowermost portion of the bowel, specifically the sigmoid colon and rectum. While this increase does not appear to be associated with gender or socioeconomic status, there are some marked geographical variations.

The fastest increase in [bowel](#) cancer incidence was observed in southern regions, with an increase of more than 10% per year in the Southwest.

The study supports the findings from recent European and American studies that also showed the incidence of [bowel cancer](#) to be increasing quickly in young adults and, importantly, provides far greater detail on how this relates to the characteristics of the young adult population.

David Messenger, Consultant Colorectal Surgeon at UH Bristol and corresponding author, added: "Bowel cancer is becoming increasingly common in younger adults. Future research needs to focus on understanding why this trend is occurring and how it might be reversed, potentially through the development of cost-effective testing strategies that detect tumors at an earlier stage or polyps before they become cancerous."

More information: A. C. Chambers et al. Demographic trends in the incidence of young-onset colorectal cancer: a population-based study, *British Journal of Surgery* (2020). [DOI: 10.1002/bjs.11486](https://doi.org/10.1002/bjs.11486)

Provided by University of Bristol

APA citation: Dramatic increase in bowel cancer in young adults in England (2020, March 10) retrieved 3 May 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-03-bowel-cancer-young-adults-england.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.