

Introduction

Bowel cancer affects the digestive system, notably the intestines where food is digested and absorbed. The bowel is divided into the small and large bowels, depending on the diameter of the section of the alimentary canal that it refers to. Bowel cancer starts in the large bowel, that is the colon or the rectum. Cells in the large bowel mutate (change the way they behave) and grow uncontrollably. Most cases start as benign growths called polyps, which can become cancerous over time. Several lifestyle and genetic factors significantly increase your risk. These factors include family history of bowel cancer, existing bowel conditions such as ulcerative colitis, diets high in red or processed meat, alcohol consumption and smoking. The likelihood of developing bowel cancer also increases after the age of 50 years.

Case Study

Mrs Smith is an Afro-Caribbean woman aged 61. She is a retired schoolteacher. Her brother was diagnosed with bowel cancer at 68 years. Mrs Smith is a non-smoker but occasionally drinks alcohol. She has presented at her GP practice reporting that she is going to the toilet more often, having looser stools (diarrhoea), sometimes containing blood. She has persistent abdominal pain and bloating and has been losing weight over the past 4-6 weeks.

Questions for discussion

- What are the main approaches and strategies that could be used to **measure** the incidence of bowel cancer in the UK?
- What are the main approaches and strategies that could be used to **monitor** the incidence of bowel cancer in the UK?
- What are the main approaches and strategies that could be used to **control** the incidence of bowel cancer in the UK?
- Identify some **factors** that may influence the health and well-being of individuals affected by bowel cancer. What health education information will you give to the community about this disease?

As this is a discussion, you will be awarded a mark based on the knowledge, understanding, and skills that you demonstrate during your talk and discussion. You may be asked questions to clarify any points you make as part of this. Your work must be underpinned by researched facts and data that show your research skills and understanding of the key points that you have included.

