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Male bowel cancer patients 'unprepared' for erectile dysfunction

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Men suffering from bowel cancer are prone to erectile dysfunction (ED) following treatment, yet most do not receive enough information about the condition, according to a study by University of Birmingham cancer experts published today (18 October).

Bowel cancer affects more than 38,000 people annually in the UK. Around half of patients survive for five years or more after treatment and the study, published on bmj.com, says this figure is likely to rise.

Men are more likely to develop bowel cancer and many will suffer from ED after treatment, report the authors, led by Professor Sue Wilson, of the Cancer and Chronic Disease Team in the Department of Primary Care and Clinical Sciences.

The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 28 patients in the West Midlands who had undergone treatment for bowel cancer. Most respondents experienced ED as a result of the treatment, yet many felt uninformed and unprepared. Almost none was receiving adequate care for the condition.

The study authors conclude that the wide diversity of this patient group calls for greater coordination of care and consistent strategies to tackle unmet needs.

Co-author, Mr Tariq Ismail, Consultant Colorectal Surgeon from the University Hospital Trust, Birmingham and Honorary Senior Lecturer in Surgery at the University of Birmingham, comments: ‘Sexual problems after surgery for bowel cancer are common, inadequately discussed and untreated. Sexual dysfunction should be discussed with patients and efforts to prevent and treat it should be increased.’

**Paper entitled: Men’s experiences of erectile dysfunction after treatment for colorectal cancer: qualitative interview study*

For more information, please contact Jenni Ameghino, University of Birmingham Press Office, tel 0121 415 8134 or 07768 924156.

Notes to editor

• Mr Tariq Ismail is available for interview. Please contact the Press Office to arrange

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