

Media Release

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Depression associated with reduced cancer survival

MELBOURNE: New Australian research has found that psychological factors may have a significant impact on the survival of people with cancer.

The Australasian Gastro Intestinal Trials Group study, to be presented today (9/11) at the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting in Melbourne, researched 421 patients with bowel cancer.

The study measured survival rates against psychological factors, including hope, optimism, depression and anxiety, while controlling for other biomedical variables. It found there was a significant decrease in survival times for those with depression.

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre Associate Professor, Penelope Schofield, said the research suggested psychological factors played a potentially significant role in health related behaviours.

“It is likely that feeling either depressed or hopeful impacts a cancer patient’s behaviours, with those high in hope more likely to seek information, second opinions, different treatment options and take better care of themselves than those who are depressed or anxious and feel they have no control over their illness,” she said.

“This research highlights the importance of empowering cancer patients to be able make choices about their treatment and providing emotional support throughout their cancer journey,” she said.

The study did not find a relationship between optimistic thinking (simply believing there will be a good outcome) and survival.

COSA President, Professor Bruce Mann, recommended health professionals encourage their patients to ask questions and become more involved in decision making around their treatment.

“This research also highlights the importance of health professionals being aware of signs of anxiety or depression and helping patients who exhibited symptoms get a proper diagnosis and appropriate treatment.”

For confidential information or support call Cancer Council Helpline on 13 1120.

[Professor Schofield will present her research at 11am today \(Nov 9\) at the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting. Room 207, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.](#)

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