

## Poor awareness of cancer risk factors in Irish males

C. Scannell<sup>1</sup>, E.S. Sullivan<sup>1</sup>, S.O. Regan<sup>1</sup>, J. Horgan<sup>1</sup>, O. Dolan<sup>2</sup>, D.G. Power<sup>3</sup> and A. Ryan<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Food and Nutritional Sciences, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland,*

<sup>2</sup>*Breakthrough Cancer Research, Cork, Ireland and*

<sup>3</sup>*Department of Medical Oncology, Mercy University Hospital and Cork University Hospital, Cork, Ireland.*

Poor knowledge of cancer risk factors among Irish females has previously been reported<sup>1</sup>. Primary prevention remains the key recommendation to tackle the rising rates of cancer globally. Successful prevention involves identifying the public's perception of cancer risk factors and dispelling any cancer-related myths.

Understanding misconception can help to inform cancer prevention programs and ensure their success. The aim of this study is to complete the first national survey on the perception of cancer risk factors in Irish males. A 48-question online survey from a previous study was adapted for male-specific cancers and redistributed to male participants only<sup>1</sup>. Any Irish males over the age of 18 was eligible to take part. Incomplete or partially complete surveys were excluded. Females and those under 18 were also excluded. The survey-monkey link was advertised via social media, online forums and emailed to external organisations in early 2017. Analysis was conducted via SPSS. There were 995 male respondents, 9% were healthcare professionals (HCPs).

Mean (SD) age was 37 (11) years. 75% had post Leaving Certificate education. 4% of the cohort reported being a cancer survivor or currently being treated for cancer. Being worried about developing cancer was reported by 74%. When asked the open-ended question "in your opinion what are the top 5 risk factors for cancer?", the top responses were smoking (80%), poor diet (71%) and consuming alcohol (48%). It was identified by 95% that diet plays a significant role in cancer risk, but when asked about individual dietary factors, knowledge gaps appeared. Only 63% were aware that red meat is a risk factor for cancer. It was thought that organic food (58%) and detox diets (23%) would reduce cancer risk. Supplements were deemed necessary for cancer prevention by 25% of HCPs and 38% non-HCPs ( $p = 0.018$ ). The statement 'complete avoidance of alcohol is the best way to prevent cancer' was disagreed with by 47% of HCPs and 52% of non-HCPs ( $p = 0.004$ ). The location of fat in the body was not seen as important by 16% of HCPs and 30% of non-HCPs (apple vs. pear shaped) ( $p = 0.004$ ). A considerable proportion of Irish males are misinformed. These findings suggest that public awareness of common risk factors for cancer is low. Efforts are needed to improve public health messages relating to cancer risk. This is the first national survey examining awareness of cancer risk factors in Irish males.

### Acknowledgments

ESS is an IRC Enterprise Partnership Scheme Fellow, whose research is funded by the Irish Research Council and Nualtra Ltd.

### References

1. Ryan AM, Cushen S, Schellekens H, *et al.* (2015) *Oncologist* **20** (4), 372–8.