

# Is pancreatic cancer becoming more common in the young?

## NCIN Data Briefing

### Background

There was a concern that the incidence of pancreatic cancer in patients under 50 might be increasing. As these groups are often considered at low risk of pancreatic cancer the concern was that a cohort of adults might be at higher risk and that they might be receiving a late diagnosis and therefore not receiving timely treatment. This briefing investigates whether the incidence of pancreatic cancer is increasing in the younger age groups.

### Results

There were 53,265 patients diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in England between 1998 and 2006. 411 patients were aged between 20 and 39, which equated to an average of 23 cases per year (Table 1). There were less than 50 cases per year for those in their 30s and an average of 185 per year for those in their 40s.

The age specific incidence of pancreatic cancer increased with age and was highest in males and females aged over 80. The incidence remained stable in all age groups over 50, except for females aged 50-59 where there was a slight increase in incidence ( $p=0.039$ ) (Figures 1 & 2).

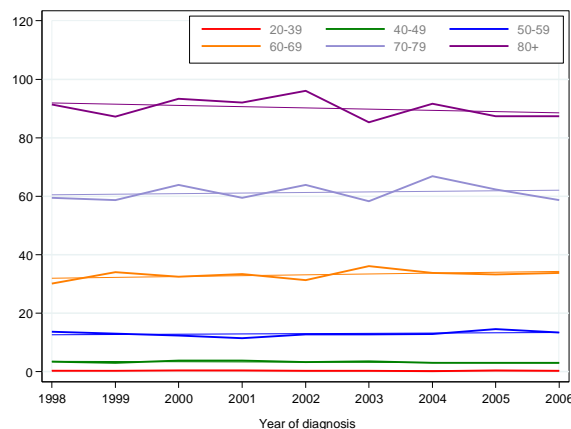
The age specific incidence rates in patients under 50 showed no significant increase or decrease over this time period for males. For females there was a suggestion of a slight increase in age specific rates for the 20-39 year olds although this was only of borderline significance ( $p=0.044$ ) and was based on a small number of cases (Figures 3 & 4).

#### KEY MESSAGE:

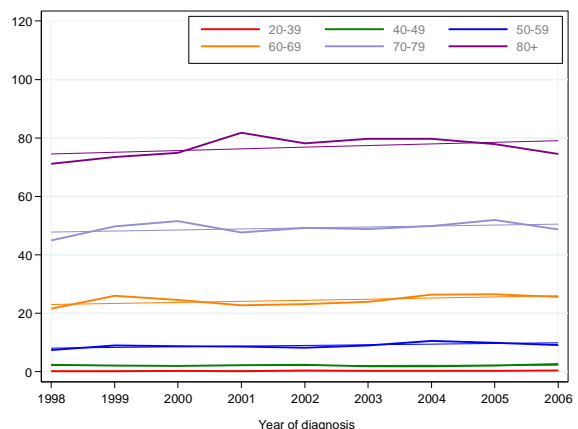
*There was no definite increase in the incidence of pancreatic cancer in patients aged under 50 years diagnosed in England between 1998 and 2006.*

Age group	1998-2006			
	Males		Females	
	Cases	(%)	Cases	(%)
<19	<6	(0.0)	<6	(0.0)
20-39	220	(0.8)	191	(0.7)
40-49	996	(3.8)	672	(2.5)
50-59	3,574	(13.8)	2,517	(9.2)
60-69	6,751	(26.0)	5,291	(19.4)
70-79	8,754	(33.7)	8,885	(32.6)
80+	5,685	(21.9)	9,722	(35.6)

**Table 1: Number of cases (%) of pancreatic cancer (ICD10 C25) by age group for patients diagnosed between 1998 and 2006 in England.**



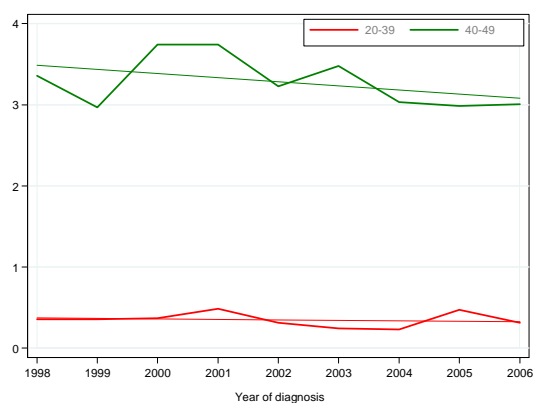
**Figure 1: Age specific incidence rates of pancreatic cancer for patients by year of diagnosis, males, England, 1998-2006.**



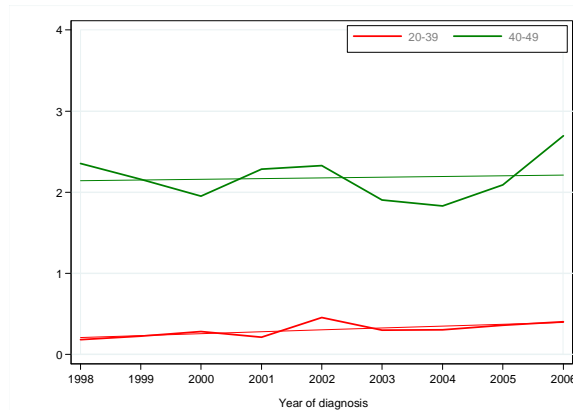
**Figure 2: Age specific incidence rates of pancreatic cancer for patients by year of diagnosis, females, England, 1998-2006.**

## Methods

Data were extracted on 53,265 patients diagnosed with pancreatic cancer (ICD10 C25) resident in England between 1998 and 2006 from the National Cancer Repository Dataset. Age specific rates were calculated for patients in 6 age groups; 20-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79 and 80+. Linear regression models were fitted to test for trends over time.



**Figure 3: Age specific incidence rates of pancreatic cancer for patients aged between 20 and 50, by year of diagnosis, males, England, 1998-2006.**



**Figure 4: Age specific incidence rates of pancreatic cancer for patients aged between 20 and 50, by year of diagnosis, females, England, 1998-2006.**

## Final note

There was no increase in the incidence of pancreatic cancer in the younger age groups in males diagnosed in England between 1998 and 2006. However, there was a slight significant increase in the female 20-39 year age group although these figures were based on very small numbers. There was also a slight significant increase in the female 50-59 year age group.

The perception that pancreatic cancer is increasing in the young could be a result of a greater awareness of the disease in the general population and of the work of the charities associated with it. Younger patients and their families will probably be greater advocates and users of cancer charities than older patients. In addition this perception may be a result of more younger patients being seen at larger regional specialist centres following the centralisation of pancreatic cancer services. This question will be investigated again using more recent years of data.

### FIND OUT MORE:

#### Thames Cancer Registry

Thames Cancer Registry is the lead Cancer Registry for upper gastrointestinal cancers.

<http://www.tcr.org.uk>

#### Other useful resources within the NCIN partnership:

Cancer Research UK CancerStats – Key facts and detailed statistics for health professionals

<http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/>

The National Cancer Intelligence Network is a UK-wide initiative, working to drive improvements in standards of cancer care and clinical outcomes by improving and using the information collected about cancer patients for analysis, publication and research. Sitting within the National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI), the NCIN works closely with cancer services in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In England, the NCIN is part of the National Cancer Programme.