

Unmasking Bowel Cancer: An Unseen yet Widespread Threat

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Introduction

Bowel cancer, also known as colorectal cancer, is a potentially fatal disease and one of the leading causes of cancer deaths globally. Despite advancements in medical technology and screening methods, a significant number of cases remain undetected until the disease has reached an advanced stage. This article will dissect the nature, causes, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment options of bowel cancer to provide a comprehensive overview. Bowel cancer typically begins as small, benign clumps of cells called polyps that form on the inner lining of the bowel. While most polyps are harmless, some can develop into cancerous tumors over time. The disease primarily affects the large bowel, which comprises the colon and rectum. Though bowel cancer can occur at any age, the risk significantly increases in individuals over the age of 50. Several factors contribute to the onset of bowel cancer. Genetics play a key role; if a close relative has had bowel cancer, your risk is significantly higher.

Description

Lifestyle factors such as diet also play an essential part. A diet high in processed meats and red meat, combined with low intake of fiber, fruits, and vegetables, can increase the risk of bowel cancer. Other risk factors include sedentary lifestyles, obesity, heavy alcohol consumption, smoking, and conditions like inflammatory bowel disease. Symptoms of bowel cancer may be subtle and easily overlooked. They include changes in bowel habits, such as persistent diarrhea or constipation, blood in the stool, abdominal pain, discomfort or bloating, unexplained weight loss, and fatigue. However, these symptoms can also be indicative of other less serious conditions, leading to delay in diagnosis. Early detection of bowel cancer can significantly improve the prognosis. Screening methods like colonoscopies and fecal occult blood tests are vital tools. A colonoscopy involves the use of a long, thin tube with a small camera to examine the entire colon and rectum. Polyps or other abnormal tissue can be removed during the procedure for further testing. In contrast, fecal occult blood tests detect tiny amounts of blood in the stool, which can be an early sign of cancer. Once a diagnosis is made, treatment plans are individualized based on the patient's overall health, age, and stage of the cancer. Surgery is often the first line of treatment, where the goal is to remove the cancerous tissues and any nearby lymph nodes. If the cancer is more advanced, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or targeted drug therapy may be employed. Immunotherapy, an emerging treatment strategy that boosts

the body's immune system to fight cancer, is showing promise in treating advanced bowel cancer [1-4].

Conclusion

Research is ongoing into genetic profiling of tumors, which can help tailor treatments to individual patients and improve outcomes. Prevention is equally important as treatment. Regular screening, a balanced diet rich in fiber, fruits, and vegetables, regular exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, and avoiding tobacco and excessive alcohol can significantly reduce the risk of bowel cancer. Bowel cancer's stealthy nature makes it a formidable health challenge. However, knowledge is power. By understanding the risk factors, recognizing the signs, and responding promptly, we can take the upper hand. Regular screening is of utmost importance, especially for those at a higher risk due to age or family history. Medical science has made significant strides in battling bowel cancer, and survival rates continue to improve. Research is paving the way for more effective treatments, providing hope for future generations. Remember, early detection saves lives. Awareness, vigilance, and taking preventive measures can make all the difference in combating bowel cancer.

Acknowledgement

None.

Conflict of Interest

None.

Reference

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Citation: Godan J (2023) Unmasking Bowel Cancer: An Unseen yet Widespread Threat. J Gastrointest Dig Syst 13:744.

Received: 29-May-2023, Manuscript No. JGDS-23-108688 Editor assigned: 31-May-2023, PreQC No. JGDS-23-108688(PQ); Reviewed: 14-June-2023, QC No. JGDS-23-108688; Revised: 19-June-2023, Manuscript No. JGDS-23-108688(R); Published: 26-June-2023, DOI: 10.4172/2161-069X.1000744

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