

## **Studies show prehabilitation before cancer treatment enables empowerment, resilience and long-term health**

### **Major new report calls for integrated action on psychological support, physical activity and nutrition**

Macmillan Cancer Support, the Royal College of Anaesthetists (RCoA) and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Cancer and Nutrition Collaboration are calling for changes to the delivery of cancer care across the UK, with a greater focus on prehabilitation including nutrition, physical activity and psychological support.

Seventy per cent of the 1.8 million people in the UK living with cancer are also living with one or more other long-term health conditions.<sup>1</sup> The guidance report, [Prehabilitation for people with cancer](#), released today promotes evidence that when services are redesigned so that prehabilitation is integrated into the cancer pathway:

- patients feel empowered and quality of life is improved
- physical and psychological resilience to cancer treatments is maximised
- long-term health is improved.

Teams from Macmillan Cancer Support, RCoA and NIHR have worked together to develop these principles and guidance together with an action plan. This sets out how NHS organisations across the UK can replicate some of the pioneering work already taking place at a limited number of Trusts – all of which have demonstrated how prehabilitation has improved outcomes and reduced the risk of disease progression<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Report recommendations:**

- interventions targeted at improving physical and/or mental health should start as early as possible and in advance of any cancer treatment (not just the first cancer treatment)
- prehabilitation, as a component of rehabilitation, should underpin the whole cancer pathway and is an approach that should be adopted for all people with cancer
- all cancer treatments should be led through cancer multidisciplinary teams (MDT) which should have representation from those delivering prehabilitation, therefore providing oversight of the prehabilitation needs of the person to ensure prehabilitation is taking place
- all people with cancer should have a co-developed personalised prehabilitation care plan as part of their overall care
- education in nutrition, exercise, psychology and behavioural change, should be integrated throughout the undergraduate and postgraduate training of health and care professionals

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<sup>1</sup> Macmillan Cancer Support: [‘The burden of cancer and other long-term health conditions’](#)

<sup>2</sup> Macmillan Cancer Support: [Physical activity and Cancer](#)

- services delivering prehabilitation should be co-designed and produced with patients and carers
- implementation and effectiveness of prehabilitation should be audited as part of a quality assurance and improvement framework delivered and reported according to recognised standards
- the Professional Standards Authority, Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity and the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences should work together to define an approach to achieving accreditation and/or regulation for exercise professionals in prehabilitation.

**June Davis, Advisor for Allied Health Professionals at Macmillan Cancer Support, says:**

*“Being diagnosed with cancer can turn life upside down and many people experience anxiety and uncertainty whilst they wait to start treatment. Prehabilitation supports people during this difficult time to prepare both physically and mentally for treatment, reclaim a sense of control and improve their health in the long-term.*”

*“We want to see prehabilitation implemented soon after diagnosis so that people living with cancer feel empowered to improve their health and get the personalised care they need. To make this a reality we urgently need the Government to invest in the NHS workforce so that there are enough professionals with the right skills and resources to deliver this care now and in the future.”*

**Dr Mike Grocott, RCoA council member and Joint Project leader**

*“Prehabilitation offers people with cancer personal empowerment at a time when they often feel that they have little control over what is happening to them. As a consequence, we see better quality of life as well as improved resilience to the effects of cancer treatments resulting in fewer complications. All this adds up to happier patients experiencing real health benefits.*”

*“As a Consultant Anaesthetist working in Southampton, my patients tell me how prehabilitation offers them the opportunity to take control of their own care. We all see the improved resilience that prehabilitation brings, not only enabling more rapid recovery following treatment, but on occasions opening the possibility of receiving treatments that were previously out of reach. The potential value of long-term behavioural change and the positive health impact this change may deliver is enticing to all involved – patients and professionals alike.”*

**Dr Lucy Allen, Head of Collaborations, National Institute of Health Research says:**

*“On receiving a diagnosis, people with cancer face many challenges. For some, the cancer may already have affected their physical and nutritional state, and their psychological wellbeing before treatment starts. Individually and collectively, such changes can decrease resilience to the cancer and affect the response to surgery or systemic anti-cancer treatment. Put simply, being physically, nutritionally and psychologically ‘unfit’ is associated with increased risks and complications during treatment. The challenge therefore is to identify those who are at risk and prepare them ahead of their treatment in an attempt to reduce their risks and complications, and improve their response to treatment.”*

**ENDS**

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## Royal College of Anaesthetists

Anaesthesia is the largest single hospital specialty in the NHS. The Royal College of Anaesthetists is the professional body responsible for the specialty throughout the UK, and it ensures the quality of patient care through the maintenance of standards in anaesthesia, critical care and pain medicine. [www.rcoa.ac.uk](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk)

## Macmillan Cancer Support

We're here to help everyone with cancer live life as fully as they can, providing physical, financial and emotional support. So whatever cancer throws your way, we're right there with you. For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00 or visit [macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk) To give, fundraise or volunteer call 0300 1000 200 or visit [macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk)

## NIHR Cancer and Nutrition Collaboration

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is the nation's largest funder of health and care research. The NIHR:

- Funds, supports and delivers high quality research that benefits the NHS, public health and social care
- Engages and involves patients, carers and the public in order to improve the reach, quality and impact of research
- Attracts, trains and supports the best researchers to tackle the complex health and care challenges of the future
- Invests in world-class infrastructure and a skilled delivery workforce to translate discoveries into improved treatments and services
- Partners with other public funders, charities and industry to maximise the value of research to patients and the economy

The NIHR was established in 2006 to improve the health and wealth of the nation through research, and is funded by the Department of Health and Social Care. In addition to its national role, the NIHR supports applied health research for the direct and primary benefit of people in low- and middle-income countries, using UK aid from the UK government. The NIHR Cancer and Nutrition Collaboration drives research and action focused on diet, nutrition and physical activity in cancer. [www.cancerandnutrition.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.cancerandnutrition.nihr.ac.uk)