
New data highlights urgency in bowel cancer screening

Five million Australians missing out on test that could save their lives

New data on bowel cancer screening released today highlights the urgent need to fully implement screening for all Australians over 50, according to Cancer Council Australia.

An analysis of bowel cancers by Biogrid Australia¹ shows the current screening program, limited to three age groups, has found double the number of bowel cancers at the most curable stage, compared with cancers found after reporting of symptoms.

“This data shows how effective a national screening program can be, yet the program is currently only available to 50, 55 and 65 year-olds,” said Cancer Council Australia CEO Professor Ian Olver. “Five million Australians are missing out on a test that could help save their lives.”

According to the data, 41 per cent of cancers found through the program were at the most curable stage (stage A), compared with just 18 per cent found through testing people reporting symptoms.

Launching a new Cancer Council campaign – ***Get Behind Bowel Screening*** (www.getbehindbowelscreening.com.au) – which calls on the Government to extend screening to all Australians aged 50 and over, Professor Olver said the Biogrid data showed that bowel cancer screening found the majority of bowel cancers early, when treatment had the best chance of success.

“This data supports what we have known for 10 years - faecal occult blood testing is a highly effective population screening tool for bowel cancer,” Professor Olver said.

“However, not only are five million Australians currently missing out, current participants are only offered one-off screening. This is contrary to national health guidelines, which recommend screening at least every two years from the age of 50.”

Professor Olver said that according to conservative estimates, the Government could save the lives of more than 30 Australians each week by expanding the program to include all Australians 50 and over. Further delays in program expansion would lead to “more unnecessary deaths.” Despite recent quality issues associated with some screening kits, Professor Olver urged people not to lose faith in this vital program.

Cancer Council is calling on all Australians to log on to www.getbehindbowelscreening.com.au and send an email to pressure the Government to fully implement the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program.

Further information and audio: www.cancer.org.au/getbehindbowelscreening

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¹ Data source: **Bi-National Colorectal Cancer Audit**. This is collaboration being led by The Colorectal Surgical Society of Australia and New Zealand (CSSANZ) with The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) and BioGrid Australia.

Background information:

Results from Biogrid:

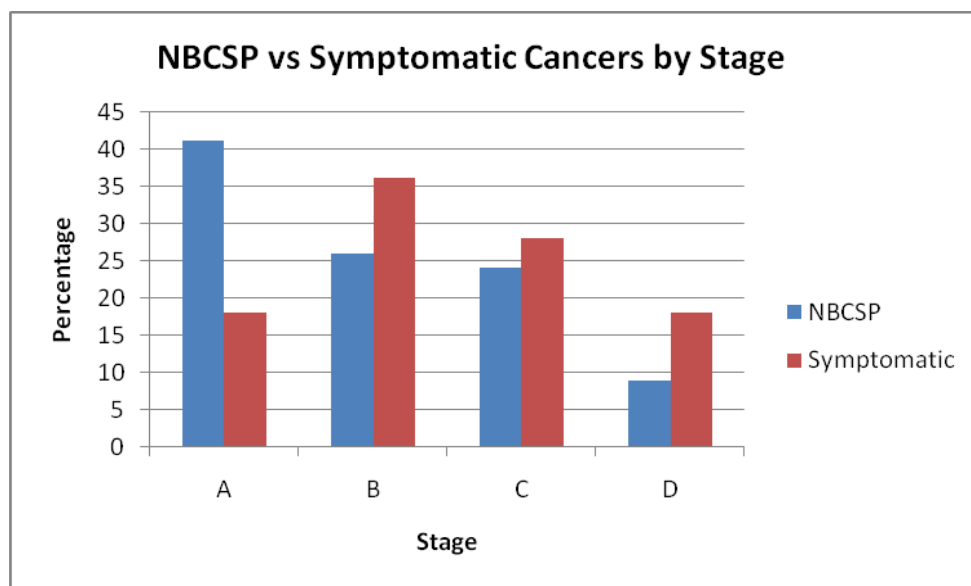
NBCSP versus symptomatic cancers by stage (1/5/06- 30/4/09):

For stage analysis the 121 patients that were diagnosed by FOBT but not as part of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP) were excluded. Therefore the following stage analysis is of NBCSP vs symptomatic presentation only. The total number of patients looked at was 2165.

Stage	NBCSP	Symptomatic	Total
A	39 (41%)	346 (18%)	385
B	25 (26%)	662 (36%)	687
C	23 (24%)	513 (28%)	536
D	8 (9%)	320 (18%)	328
Total	95 (4.9%)	1841(95.1%)	1936 (100%)

Missing= 229

P<0.0001



Graph of NBCSP versus symptomatic cancers according to stage at diagnosis.

The NBCSP has so far had a measurable impact with 4.7% (95 /2286) of all colorectal cancers being diagnosed as a result of the NBCSP despite it only being offered to select age groups.

(Total number of patients used in this analysis = 2286).

About Biogrid

www.biogrid.org.au/wps/portal

BioGrid is a unique platform for life science research teams to access and share genetic and clinical research data across multiple organisations in an ethically approved and secure way, using the World Wide Web.