
10,000 Australians demand bowel cancer screening

New research shows nine in ten can survive bowel cancer if found early

A community-based Cancer Council advocacy campaign (www.getbehindbowelscreening.com.au) has motivated 10,000 Australians to call for expansion of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, amid new research showing 93 per cent of bowel cancer patients can survive if diagnosed early.

Cancer Council Australia Chief Executive Officer, Professor Ian Olver, said there was a stark gap between what was achievable in bowel cancer detection and current survival outcomes in Australia – something the community increasingly viewed as unacceptable.

“New research from the UK shows 93 per cent of bowel cancer patients would be alive after five years if diagnosed early, yet Australia’s five-year survival rate is only 62 per cent,” Professor Olver said.

“The sooner Australia’s bowel cancer screening program goes from one-off screening for people turning 50, 55 and 65 to two-yearly screening of everyone 50 and over, the sooner the potential to prevent deaths will be realised.”

The research, by the UK’s National Cancer Intelligence Network, showed 93 per cent of bowel cancer patients diagnosed at the earliest stage (stage A) were alive five years later. The prognosis for those diagnosed at later stages was progressively worse: stage B – 77%, stage C - 48%, stage D – 7%.

“These findings are even more compelling in light of data from Biogrid Australia that shows screening in Australia is detecting double the number of cancers in their earliest, most treatable stage compared with those diagnosed through symptoms.

“In a tight economic climate, bowel cancer screening is one of the best health investments available to Government – as it is cost-effective as well as having the potential to save 30 lives per week.

“Bowel cancer has neither the profile nor the funding it deserves, but with 10,000 voices calling on Government to expedite its screening program through our online campaign within just a few weeks, awareness of the lost opportunities to prevent bowel cancer death is rapidly growing.”

Cancer Council’s ‘Get Behind Bowel Screening’ campaign (www.getbehindbowelscreening.com.au), launched in June, asks Australians to email their local parliamentarian and urge them to support full implementation of the screening program by 2012.

MEDIA CONTACTS

Lesley Branagan, 0439 827 781 lesley.branagan@cancer.org.au
Rebecca Cook, 03 9635 5207 rebecca.cook@cancervic.org.au