



Issue Date: 8 May 2008

PRESS RELEASE

Dr. Ben Colleypriest (can be photographed on Wednesday 14th in the Endoscopy Suite at the RUH. Please liaise with him directly to arrange this. Not possible to arrange photo in University Lab).

Alternatively a photo attached to the press release can be used.

(From left to right: Dr. John Linehan, consultant gastroenterologist, Dr Ben Colleypriest, research fellow and Dr. Duncan Robertson, consultant gastroenterologist).

Doctors at the Royal United Hospital are collaborating with scientists at the University of Bath in ground breaking research into the causes of oesophageal cancer.

Doctor Ben Colleypriest, who works at the RUH, is a Cancer Research UK Clinical Research Fellow. He is doing a PhD into a condition called Barrett's Oesophagus. He is working alongside Doctor David Tosh from the Department of Biology and Biochemistry at the University of Bath.

Barrett's Oesophagus – which can be a precursor to cancer of the gullet - is a condition with no symptoms and no cure and is normally detected incidentally when patients have an endoscopy. Barrett's is usually the result of long term reflux of acid and bile into the oesophagus – which can be experienced by patients as heartburn.

The number of patients with B.O has increased rapidly over the last 30 years. It's an important condition for researchers because cancer of the gullet (which it can lead to) is also increasing rapidly.

Unfortunately this form of cancer often presents late and consequently has a poor prognosis. If Doctor Colleypriest can find out what causes the condition, then it could help lead to a treatment for it and the subsequent cancer could be prevented.
Doctor Colleypriest says

“I hope to understand the mechanisms that are responsible for the change from normal oesophageal cells to Barrett’s. I am looking at the genes that are responsible for the development of BO and given this understanding, hope to look for potential treatments to revert or prevent the condition”.

Once a patient has been identified as having Barrett’s oesophagus they are normally prescribed anti -acid tablets and are monitored with repeat endoscopy and tissue sampling every 2 years to look for complications of the disease.

Dr.Colleypriest’s clinical supervisor at the RUH, gastroenterologist Dr. Mark Farrant says “We are very fortunate to have a clinical scientist of Ben Colleypriest’s calibre working here in Bath. He did very well in the face of tough competition to secure funding from Cancer Research UK and his research is unique in bringing together ideas from a busy Gastroenterology Unit and a world-class developmental biology laboratory.”

EDITORS NOTES

- Oesopogheal cancer is one of the most rapidly increasing cancers in the developed world, with over 7,000 deaths (many more than road deaths) in the UK annually. Men over the age of 60 have the highest risk . It is a major health issue and yet its profile is very low.
- Last year there were 163 new cases of Upr GI cancer at the RUH.
- In a very small proportion of patients (currently less than 10%) Barrett's oesophagus can gradually lead to cancer of the gullet
- For more information <http://www.barrettsfoundation.org.uk/probe/>