



PEOPLE  
AGAINST  
CANCER

Finding the Best  
Cancer Treatment

## Cholesterol drugs *may* cut cancer risk – Wait and see

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The Scotsman

TAKING cholesterol-lowering drugs *might* decrease the risk of bowel cancer, according to new research.

A new study published in the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine suggests that the reduction in risk of developing bowel cancer could be up to 47 per cent.

Doctors welcomed the development, but said it was still only a small piece of the jigsaw in the understanding of the cancer, which is the third most common in the UK.

Researchers analysed data on 4,000 patients, almost half of whom had bowel cancer, who were asked to list every medication they had taken in the past five years.

A total of 11.6 per cent of those without colon cancer reported taking statins - drugs prescribed to lower cholesterol. In contrast only 6.1 per cent of colon cancer patients had used the drugs.

The American scientists, who conducted the study in northern Israel, took account of risk factors associated with age, sex, ethnic background and lifestyle. They also looked to see if participants had a family history of colon cancer. After taking all these factors into account, statins were still associated with a 47 per cent reduced risk of colon cancer.

Recent research has suggested that statins might protect against other types of cancer, including breast, prostate, pancreatic and oesophagus diseases.

Dr Stephen Gruber, from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, in the United States, who led the new study, said: "This is an important piece of the puzzle."

Dr John Wilson, a consultant physician in gastroenterology based in Fife, said: "This study is an observation. What needs to be done next is a controlled study. People shouldn't go to their doctors and say I have got a family history of colon cancer please prescribe statins for me."

Dr Wilson, who has worked on a pilot screening project for the disease, said that more fresh food and fibre in the diet could reduce risks and people needed to be less afraid to talk about changes in their bowel habits.

"One of the difficulties with this type of cancer is that people don't like to talk about it, which is why the national slogan is: 'Don't sit on your problems.'"