

How has cancer awareness changed over the last 20 years?

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Two interview surveys in UK - both aiming to achieve representative samples

- 1988 - Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund survey
 - 966 respondents in England, Scotland and Wales
 - Quota sampling
- 2008 - Cancer Research UK Cancer Awareness Measure survey
 - 2208 respondents in England
 - Stratified random probability sampling



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Both surveys asked about...

- Knowledge of
 - cancer symptoms
 - risk factors for cancer
 - frequency of different cancers

Symptom knowledge

Both surveys – two types of question

- Open question
 - 1988: *“What would you say are the symptoms or warning signs of cancer?”*
 - 2008: *“There are many warning signs and symptoms of cancer. Please name as many as you can think of.”*
- Closed question
 - 1988: *“Which of these, if any, do you think might be the early signs of cancer? (showcard)*
 - 2008: *“Do you think could be a sign of cancer?” (list read out)*

Open question about symptoms

1988		2008	
Symptom coded as	%	Symptom coded as	%
Lumps	61	Lump	68
Bleeding	14	Bleeding	29
Coughing	12	Cough	18
Problems with swallowing	3	Difficulty swallowing	4

Closed question about symptoms

1988	%	2008	%
Lumps	91	Unexplained lump or swelling	94
Bleeding	45	Unexplained bleeding	82
Coughing	35	Unexplained cough or hoarseness	68
Problems with swallowing	31	Persistent difficulty swallowing	77

Risk factor knowledge

Both surveys – two types of question

- Open question
 - 1988: *“What do you think causes cancer?”*
 - 2008: *“What things do you think affect a person’s chance of getting cancer?”*
- Closed question
 - 1988: *“Which of these, if any, do you think causes cancer? (showcard)”*
 - 2008: *“How much do you agree that each of these can increase the chance of getting cancer?” (list read out)”*

Open question about risk factors

1988		2008	
Risk factor coded as	%	Risk factor coded as	%
Smoking	61	Smoking	82
Hereditary	9	Family history	24
Alcohol	4	Drinking alcohol	34
Sun	7	Sun exposure	26
Obesity/overweight	1	Obesity/overweight	8

Closed question about risk factors

1988	%	2008	%
Smoking	86	Smoking any cigarettes at all	85
Alcohol	14	Drinking more than 1 unit of alcohol per day	25
Obesity/overweight	8	Being overweight	49

Frequency of different cancers

- 1988: *“Could you please tell me which type or types of cancer you can think of?”*
- 2008: *“What do you think is the first/second/third most common cancer in women/men?”*

	1988	2008	
	% naming the cancer	% naming as 1 st , 2 nd or 3 rd most common cancer	
		Women	Men
Breast	69	94	0
Colorectal	10	12	40
Lung	77	34	70
Prostate	4	0	65
Ovary	4	19	0
Cervix	38	60	0
Womb	13	5	0
Stomach	26	2	7
Skin	32	18	13
Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma	0	1	0

	1988	2008	
	% naming the cancer	% naming as 1 st , 2 nd or 3 rd most common cancer	
		Women	Men
Breast	69	94	0
Colorectal	10	12	40
Lung	77	34	70
Prostate	4	0	65
Cervix	38	60	0

		1988	2008	
	Change in incidence*	% naming the cancer	% naming as 1 st , 2 nd or 3 rd most common cancer	
			Women	Men
Breast	↑	69	94	0
Colorectal	↔	10	12	40
Lung	↔ (w) ↓ (m)	77	34	70
Prostate	↑	4	0	65
Cervix	↓	38	60	0

*Age-standardised incidence 1988 to 2007 based on numbers of new cancer registrations

Why have some aspects of cancer awareness increased?

- General level of education increased?
- Interest in health issues increased?
- Health promotion activities and awareness campaigns
- Increase in diagnosis (prostate)
- New health technologies
- Events in the weeks before the survey?
- Not worked for colorectal and lung cancer in women

Summary

Some evidence of increase in awareness:

- Symptoms
 - cough and bleeding more commonly named and recognised
- Risk factors
 - alcohol and overweight more commonly named and recognised
- Frequency of common cancers
 - colorectal and lung cancer: better awareness of these cancers – in men
 - prostate cancer awareness increased

Next steps

- Address where awareness is poor - lung and colorectal cancer awareness in women
- Need to monitor trends
- Need for standardised methods

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