

Young onset colorectal cancer

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Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer worldwide, with an estimate of over a million new cases diagnosed every year. The incidence of colorectal is rise among the younger population world wide. Routine screening for colorectal cancer in adults > 50 years of age reduced the rate of CRC, as they can be diagnosed earlier and managed efficiently with surgery or adjuvant therapy. It is unclear why there is an increase in the number of CRC among the younger population (30-35years). CRC in young adults is sporadic and could be due environmental factors such as diet, alcohol, physical inactivity, obesity etc. Few patients have inherited CRC syndromes like Lynch etc.. Early diagnosis and management can provide >90% cure and survival rate. This study aims to objectify the clinical presentations and incidence of CRC in young population.

Methods: This is a single centre retrospective cohort study including patients between the age of 30-35 years of age that underwent colonoscopy at Caboolture Hospital, Australia from January 2017 to April 2018. None of the patients mention in the study had an indication for early bowel cancer screening.

Results: A total of 224 patients underwent colonoscopy in the study period. A total of 210 (93.8%) had symptoms including rectal bleeding (51.7%), altered bowel habit (25.9%), abdominal pain (10.3%) and symptomatic anaemia (6.7%) prior to colonoscopy. Two cases of invasive adenocarcinoma were identified (0.89%, $P < 0.01$), both of which were symptomatic and were defined as stage IIIB disease on histopathology.

Conclusion: The the incidence of malignancy was nearly 1% in these low risk group. Because the number of colorectal cancer cases from inherited causes are much higher in younger individuals, it is unknown whether screening for sporadic cases in a group with such low disease rate can result in a favourable balance of harms and benefits. Early investigation should be offered to young patients with warning signs and symptoms. Most young patients who present are symptomatic and may have advanced disease at the time of diagnosis.