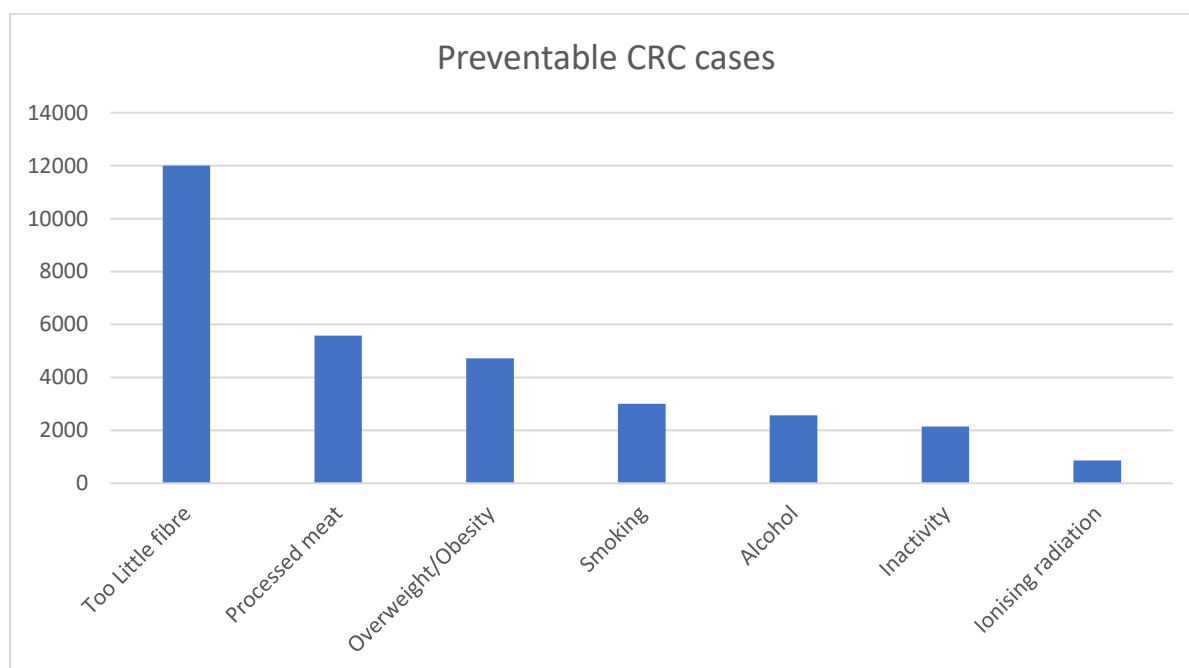


April: Bowel cancer prevention awareness month

In the UK, colorectal cancer (CRC) is the 3rd commonest cancer in both women and men, with a combined 42,886 cases per year, and 16,800 deaths per year.

However, encouragingly 54% of CRC cases (22,691) are preventable with behaviour change¹:
 28% (12,008) of cases are caused by eating too little fibre,
 13% (5,575) of cases are caused by eating processed meat,
 11% (4,717) of cases are caused by overweight and obesity,
 7% (3,002) of cases are caused by smoking,
 6% (2,573) of cases are caused by drinking alcohol,
 5% (2,144) of cases are caused by too little physical activity,
 2% (857) of cases are caused by ionising radiation.



The changes in risk:

Dietary fibre: 10% decreased risk per 10g/day

Processed meat: 18% increased risk per 50g/day

Overweight and obese: colon cancer in men: 30% increase in risk per 5 BMI units (12% in women).

Ever smokers have a c20% increased risk.

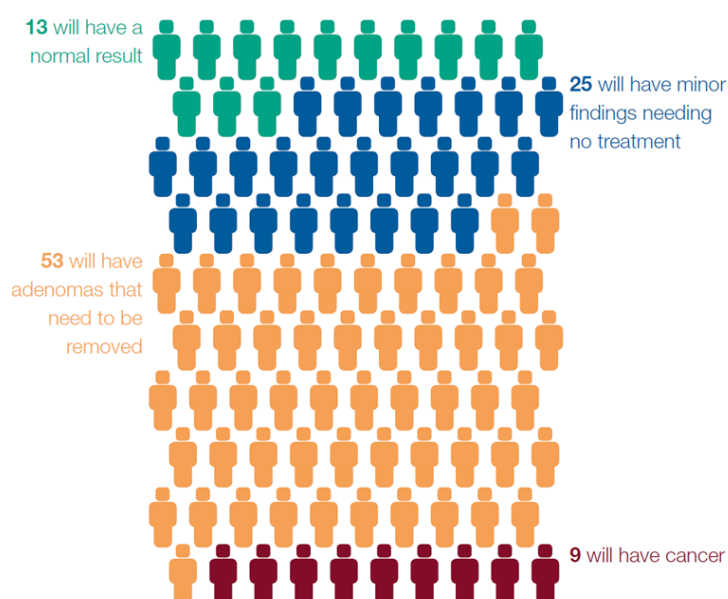
Alcohol: 7% increased risk per unit per day

Where can clinicians make a difference?

Firstly, encourage those who have not engaged with bowel screening to do so. For those who test positive (currently in England above 120mg/g of faeces), in addition to the 9%

¹ (These do not add up to 54%, as some people will have more than 1 risk factor)

found to have cancer, a further 53% have adenomas, most of which would eventually have undergone neoplastic change. In these patients, future cancers will have been prevented².



Secondly, in those with Lynch syndrome, the benefits of aspirin should be discussed. NICE guidance states: “Consider daily aspirin, to be taken for more than 2 years, to prevent colorectal cancer in people with Lynch syndrome.”³, and has published a patient decision support resource for these patients⁴.

Finally, giving very brief advice to those who would benefit from behaviour change may enable patients to reduce their bowel cancer risk.

Engaging in these interventions will help reduce the incidence of colorectal cancer, the 2nd most common cause of cancer death in the UK.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-colonoscopy/bowel-cancer-screening-having-a-colonoscopy-fit>

³ (<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng151/resources/user-guide-and-data-sources-pdf-8834927870>)

⁴ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng151/resources/lynch-syndrome-should-i-take-aspirin-to-reduce-my-chance-of-getting-bowel-cancer-pdf-8834927869>.