Press Release

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Bacteria eradication reduces gastric cancer risk by 22% in the over-60s, new research shows

(Bankcelona, October 31, 2017) Treating *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) infection of the stomach could lead to a marked reduction in the risk of stomach cancer – particularly in the elderly – according to results of a study presented today at the 25th UEG Week in Barcelona. The population-based study, which involved more than 63,000 people who had received antibiotic-based treatment for *H. pylori* infection, showed a 22% reduction in the risk of developing stomach cancer in those aged 60 years and over compared with the general population.

The research analysed the risk of gastric cancer development in a large group of individuals who had received antibiotic therapy to treat *H. pylori* infection – a type of bacteria that lives in the lining of the stomach. Of those who had been treated over the age of 60, 0.8% developed gastric cancer, in comparison to 1.1% of patients in an age-matched general population sample.

Gastric cancer is the fourth largest cancer killer in the world, accounting for 754,000 deaths in 2015. It mainly affects older people, with an average age of 69 years at the time of diagnosis.

Classified as a carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the *H. pylori* infection is the most significant factor leading to the development of gastric cancer, representing 78% of all global gastric cancer cases. The infection is thought to affect more than 50% of the world’s population, although most people do not know that they are infected until they develop symptoms of gastric irritation, such as heartburn or dyspepsia. A diagnosis is usually made using a blood or breath test, but can also be made through an endoscopy or a stool test.

Presenting the results of this major study at the Opening Plenary session of the 25th UEG Week in Barcelona, Professor WK Leung from the Department of Medicine at the University of Hong Kong, explained; “We saw a significantly lower risk of gastric cancer in people over 60 who received antibiotic therapy for their *H. pylori* infection, in comparison to the general population. The 22% reduction is remarkable, and suggests that there is real value in the treatment of this infection.”

“Although it has been commonly thought that it may be too late to give *H. pylori* eradication therapy to older subjects, we can now confidently recommend that the *H. pylori* infection should be treated in the elderly to help reduce their risk of developing gastric cancer” added Professor Leung.

References


Notes to Editors

For further information, or to arrange an interview with Dr Karsenti, please contact Luke Paskins on +44 (0)1444 811099 or media@ueg.eu

About Professor WK Leung

Professor WK Leung is currently the Li Shu Fan Medical Foundation Professor in Gastroenterology of the University of Hong Kong. His research interests are on prevention and early detection of gastric and colon cancer.

About UEG Week

UEG Week is the largest and most prestigious gastroenterology meeting in Europe and has developed into a global congress. It attracts over 14,000 participants each year, from more than 120 countries, and numbers are steadily rising. UEG Week provides a forum for basic and clinical scientists from across the globe to present their latest research in digestive and liver diseases, and also features a two-day postgraduate course that brings together top lecturers in their fields for a weekend of interactive learning.

About UEG

UEG, or United European Gastroenterology, is a professional non-profit organisation combining all the leading European societies concerned with digestive diseases. Together, its member societies represent over 22,000 specialists, working across medicine, surgery, paediatrics, gastrointestinal oncology and endoscopy. This makes UEG the most comprehensive organisation of its kind in the world, and a unique platform for collaboration and the exchange of knowledge.

To advance standards of gastroenterological care and knowledge across Europe and the world, UEG offers numerous activities and initiatives, including:

- **25th UEG Week**, celebrate with us at our jubilee meeting, the biggest congress of its kind in Europe, and one of the two largest in the world
- **UEG Education**, the universal source of knowledge in gastroenterology, providing online and classroom courses, a huge online library and delivering the latest GI news, fostering debate and discussion
- **Activity Grants**, funding Live Educational Events, Online Courses and Standards & Guidelines Initiatives organised by UEG Member Societies and other providers.
- **UEG Journal**, 10 issues per year covering translational and clinical studies from all areas of gastroenterology
- **EU Affairs**, united for digestive health in Europe – prioritising Gastroenterology on the EU health agenda

Find out more about UEG’s work by visiting www.ueg.eu or contact: Luke Paskins on +44 (0)1444 811099 or media@ueg.eu

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