

## **WASH Study**

### **(Water Assisted Sigmoidoscopy in NHS Bowel Scope Screening Programme)**

Bowel cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death in the UK. Around 1 in 14 men and 1 in 19 women will develop bowel cancer. To reduce this risk, the NHS Bowel Screening Programme has started inviting all 55 year olds for a sigmoidoscopy. This involves examining the lower bowel with a thin flexible tube with a camera on it via the back passage.

Research has shown that this test reduces bowel cancer death by 41%. During the test, the bowel is inflated with carbon dioxide, to allow passage of the camera. The problem is that bowel distention can cause pain. National surveys show that over 1 in 3 patients report moderate or severe pain. The aim of this study is to assess whether using water to minimize bowel distension, instead of gas, will make the procedure more comfortable. Early studies suggest this may be effective, but this needs to be confirmed in UK practice. It is hoped that by reducing pain, people will have a better experience, which may increase public uptake of screening. Currently only 43.7% of people participate –more cancers can be prevented if participation increases.

Professor Matthew Rutter, Chief Investigator of the WASH study and Consultant Gastroenterologist at North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust said:

*"The WASH study is important for gastroenterology research as it is looking at reducing pain and discomfort levels for patients receiving a sigmoidoscopy. It also has a focus on healthy volunteers as participants and this is something that is equally important in research. I am proud to have led the study and worked alongside such a dedicated team."*

Professor Caroline Wroe, Deputy Clinical Director for NIHR Clinical Research Network North East and North Cumbria said:

*"I would like to congratulate the four trusts in the region who recruited to this study. It is important we continue to support research into gastroenterology."*

This study recruited at five sites, with four of them being in the North East and North Cumbria.

- 1. North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (UK)**
2. St Mark's Hospital, London (UK)
- 3. South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust (UK)**
- 4. Queen Elizabeth Hospital Gateshead (UK)**
- 5. County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (UK)**