

Around 25% of penis cancer patients ‘are not getting the right treatment’



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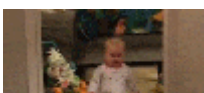
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Researchers said this is in part due to patients being reluctant to go ahead with surgery – which involves removing all or part of the penis. (Picture: REX/ Shutterstock)

Around 25% of penis cancer patients are not receiving the right treatment, an international study has shown.

Penis cancer is considered a rare cancer, with around one in 100,000 men contracting it every year in the West, meaning a country such as the UK has around 640 cases a year.



The study looked at patients in Italy, Spain, the United States, Brazil and Hungary, and found that 25% did not receive the recommended treatment.

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They found those who did not receive the recommended treatment had half the survival rate of those who were treated according to guidelines.

Commenting on the study, Dr Vijay Sangar, director of surgery at the cancer-specialising Christie Hospital in Manchester, said patients with rare cancers often get short-changed because the cancer is so seldom encountered by doctors.



He said: 'We can suggest that if we treat rare cancers in national or even international centres of excellence, the chances of better management improve.'

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'In the UK for example, we centralised the treatment of penis cancer into just 10 centres of excellence, whereas in some countries such as Hungary, Spain and Italy, these rare urological cancers are still treated locally, which may reflect the lower survival rates.'

Lead author Dr Luca Cindolo said: 'From our work, we see that around twice as many patients survive if they have been treated according to recommended guidelines.'



'In around half of those patients not treated according to guidelines, the decision was made by the doctor, and we suspect that this is because many doctors are unfamiliar with treating this rare, but devastating cancer.

'In one in six cases, the patient, or the patient's carers, made the decision not to be treated according to guidelines.



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'We often find that patients don't want to be treated, or that the patients' carers are unwilling to take the decision to treat.

'These are often difficult treatment decisions to take, and so they need to be arrived at after open discussion between the patient and the medical team.

'It's a condition which most urologists don't see very often, so it's best if the medical team is experienced in dealing with the condition.

'This may mean that the treatment in national or international centres of excellence is the best way to proceed.'

The study, which examined the records of 425 patients, is being presented at the European Association of Urology conference in Copenhagen.



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