



## News Front Page

World

UK

England

Northern Ireland

Scotland

Wales

Business

Politics

Health

Medical notes

Education

Science/Nature

Technology

Entertainment

Have Your Say

Magazine

In Pictures

Week at a Glance

Country Profiles

In Depth

Programmes

BBC SPORT

BBC WEATHER

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BBC ON THIS DAY

Last Updated: Tuesday, 24 August, 2004, 23:43 GMT 00:43 UK

[E-mail this to a friend](#)[Printable version](#)**'Better' bowel cancer test found****Scientists believe they may have found a much more accurate way of diagnosing bowel cancer.**

Researchers in Germany have discovered that a chemical from cancer tumours leaks into the bowel.



The scientists say further research is needed

Writing in the British Journal of Cancer, they said this chemical, called Tumour M2-PK, can be found in the faeces of people with the disease.

They said testing for the chemical could also enable doctors to find out how advanced the disease is.

The UK Government is currently considering introducing a bowel-screening programme.

One of the tests under consideration is the faecal occult blood test (FOBT). It is used to detect blood in the faeces - a symptom of bowel cancer.

However, the test cannot tell whether the blood is caused by a tumour or whether it is the result of something less serious, such as piles.

“ There is currently much interest in this area of research ”

Professor Robert Souhami,  
Cancer Research UK

Only about six out of every 100 people with a single positive FOBT will have bowel cancer.

This means that many people who do not have cancer may have to undergo unnecessary procedures.

**More accurate**

Scientists at Giessen University Hospital, in Germany, believe their test is much more accurate.

They obtained faecal samples from 204 patients who were about to undergo colonoscopies, which involves inserting a tiny camera into the rectum. The colonoscopy established that 60 of these had bowel cancer.

The scientists found that patients with the disease had much higher levels of Tumour M2-PK.

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"We found a significant difference in the level of Tumour M2-PK between those with a confirmed diagnosis of bowel cancer and those who were disease free," said Dr Philip Hardt, who led the study.

"There was also a very strong link between the amount of enzyme found and how far the cancer had spread."

The scientists are now planning further studies but they are confident their findings could lead to a new test for bowel cancer.

"We will now look to test Tumour M2-PK in a large trial, but this enzyme has the potential to be an excellent safety net," said Dr Hardt.

"It could detect more cases of the disease and possibly save unnecessary medical procedures due to fewer false positive results."

Professor Robert Souhami, director of policy and communication at Cancer Research UK, which owns the British Journal of Cancer, welcomed the study.

"There is currently much interest in this area of research," he said.

"We hope that enzymes such as this one will eventually offer not only useful screening tools, but also an effective method of monitoring bowel cancer patients in remission, so that any return of disease can be quickly detected and acted upon."

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