

Brain tumor characteristics could help predict survival in people over 70

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Credit: Cancer Research UK

Characteristics like seizures, location of the tumour, and pressure in the brain, give insight into length of survival and treatment options for brain tumour patients over the age of 70, according to new research presented at the National Cancer Research Institute's (NCRI) Cancer Conference in Liverpool.

In order to understand which treatments would be most appropriate for different patients, we need to understand what features predict how long patients with the disease survive.

This new study looked at the records of 339 brain tumour patients over the age of 70. Overall, the study found that patients survived for an average of around four months and just four per cent were alive two years after their diagnosis.

Researchers based at the Brighton and Sussex Medical School, Beatson West of Scotland Cancer Centre, and The Royal Marsden Hospital, showed that patients with [brain tumours](#) who went to the doctor because of seizures were a third more likely to survive longer than those who presented with other symptoms such as speech impairment, confusion or weakness.

The study also found that patients with higher pressure on the brain tended not to live as long. And people with tumours deeper in the brain or on the cerebellum also fared worse.

Among brain tumour patients, those over the age of 70 are less likely than younger patients to survive a year after diagnosis, partly because they tend to have more aggressive forms of brain tumours or are frailer.

Around 34 per cent of all brain tumour cases are diagnosed in people over 70 in the UK every year - around 3700 cases. And about 2400 over 70s die from the disease each year.

This research was supported by The Brain Tumour Charity.

Dr Cressida Lorimer, study author and researcher at the Brighton and Sussex Medical School, said: "Our study in brain tumour patients aged over 70 showed that scans at diagnosis played a crucial role in

determining how long a patient was likely to survive - distinguishing the position of the tumour, if there are multiple tumours, and assessing the amount of pressure on the brain.

"There's an urgent need to improve survival and quality of life for brain tumour patients over the age of 70. And, because of a lack of research, it's difficult to make the best treatment decisions for individuals when they are sitting in front of you in the clinic.

"Next we need to develop a guide for clinicians to improve how we treat elderly patients and to make decisions that could enhance quality of life."

Dr Karen Kennedy, Director of the NCRI, said: "The outlook for brain tumour patients, especially for the elderly, is worryingly low. Research like this provides better evidence on which to base treatment decisions.

"The NCRI recognises the need to increase research activity in brain tumour research and, together with some of our Partners, we are working with the Department of Health and other key stakeholders, to find ways to address this."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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