

In the news

WESTERN STYLE: A RECURRING THEME?

The influence of diet and lifestyle on the risk of developing colon cancer is now widely acknowledged. However, what has not been clear until now is how diet affects the chances of survival for patients already diagnosed with colon cancer.

A new study from the Dana–Farber Cancer Institute in the US has found that colon cancer patients who eat a ‘Western diet’ high in red meat, fatty products, refined grains and desserts may be increasing their chance of disease relapse and early death.

The study looked at 1,009 patients with stage III colon cancer who had been treated with both surgery and chemotherapy, and found that those who most closely followed a Western diet were more than three times more likely to relapse than those whose diets were at the opposite end of the scale.

It is the first study of its kind to focus on the role of diet in recurrence of colon cancer, and the study’s lead author, Jeffrey Meyerhardt, suggests that “...people treated for locally advanced colon cancer can actively improve their odds of survival by their dietary choices” (<http://www.sciencedaily.com>, 15 August 2007). This sentiment was echoed by Andrejs Avots-Avotins, an associate professor of internal medicine at Texas A&M Health Science Center College of Medicine, who suggests that “Maybe the message is it’s never too late to change your diet,” (<http://www.washingtonpost.com>, 14 August 2007).

However, the authors were keen to stress that this was an observational study, and does not provide conclusive proof that the diet followed by the patients caused the results. Meyerhardt concludes that “Further studies are needed to delineate which components of such a diet show the strongest association” (<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com>, 15 August 2007).

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