

St Mark's Hospital Foundation

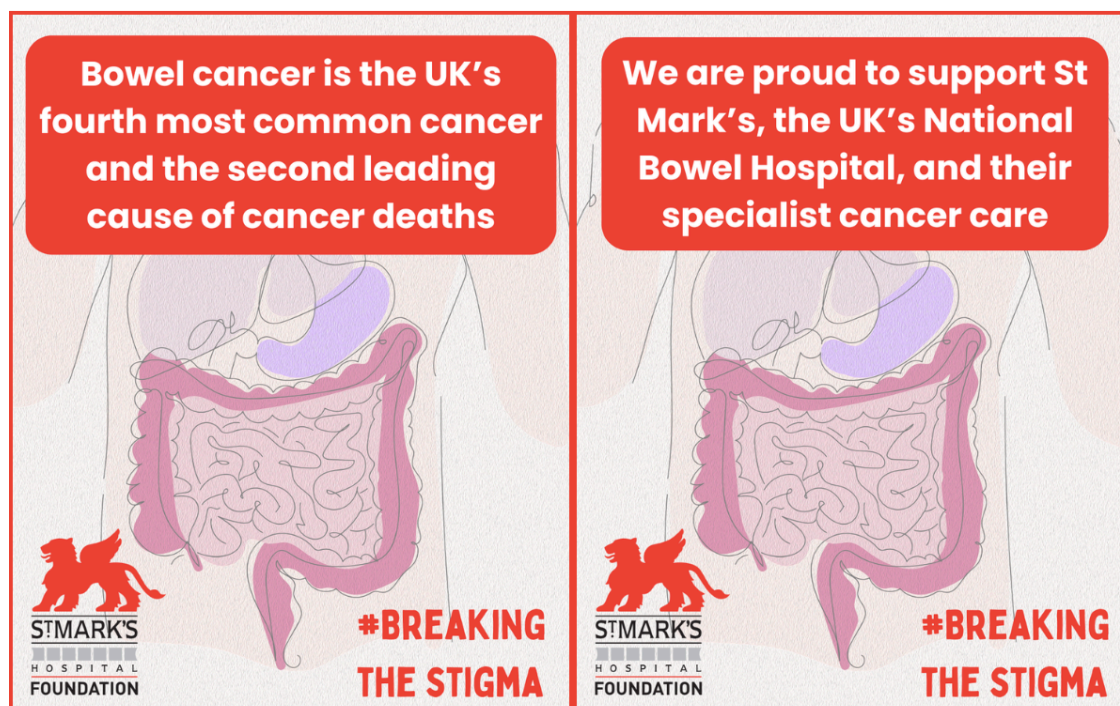
Special Edition for Bowel Cancer
Awareness Month



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Bowel Cancer Awareness Month



"Bowel Cancer Awareness Month is a really important reminder of the value of early diagnosis and open conversations about bowel health. Early action really does make all the difference."

- Dr Diya Kapila, St Mark's Clinical Research Fellow

April is Bowel Cancer Awareness Month in the UK, a time dedicated to raising awareness of bowel cancer and its symptoms and the importance of early detection.

When diagnosed in its early stages, bowel cancer has a 90% survival rate. Anyone experiencing blood in their poo, a persistent change in

bowel habits, unexplained weight loss, extreme tiredness or fatigue, or a pain or lump in their stomach should speak to their GP.

St Mark's Hospital is a key site for the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme. The service looks for polyps (small growths on the lining of the colon or the rectum). Detecting and removing polyps before they can become cancerous can reduce the risk of getting bowel cancer by half.

In addition, the St Mark's Centre for Familial Intestinal Cancer ensures prompt diagnosis and surveillance of patients with genetic conditions associated with bowel cancer or from a family at high risk of bowel cancers.



St Mark's state-of-the-art endoscopy department continues to break ground in cancer prevention technology. The site recently acquired an AI polyp detection unit which will significantly increase the rate of detection of pre-cancerous polyps in patients.

In addition to screening for bowel cancer, St Mark's Hospital provides world class cancer treatment for patients after diagnosis. A multi-disciplinary team, including specialist radiologists, surgeons, nurses and other health care professionals, offers a personalised pathway of care for each patient until they are well enough to be referred back to their local team.

The Complex Cancer Clinic is a specialist service that treats patients with recurrent and advanced pelvic and colorectal cancers. As a referral centre, St Mark's is likely to perform two-to three-times more bowel cancer operations compared to other UK hospitals.

The St Mark's Gastrointestinal Consequences of Cancer service cares for patients experiencing GI problems after pelvic radiation, surgery and chemotherapy.



John was a St Mark's Complex Cancer Clinic patient. He and his wife, Wendy, took on an incredible challenge, walking nearly 1,000 miles from Land's End to John O'Groats, to fundraise for St Mark's Hospital Foundation and thank the St Mark's team that cared for him.

At St Mark's Hospital Foundation, we are proud to support St Mark's, the UK's national bowel hospital, where world-leading specialists provide expert care for bowel cancer patients and undertake research to improve patient outcomes.

In this month's special edition newsletter, you will read some first hand accounts from St Mark's patients and their loved ones on living with bowel cancer. You will also be able to learn more about the world-class clinicians and ground-breaking cancer research we support.

Katie's Run for St Mark's

This Bowel Cancer Awareness Month, we are honoured to share the stories of St Mark's patients and their families. We are inspired by their resilience and their dedication to supporting St Mark's Hospital Foundation which makes a measurable difference for patients impacted by bowel cancer.



Katie, daughter of a St Mark's patient, shared her family's experience.

“ Early last year, my mum was diagnosed with colon cancer through a routine screening for bowel cancer. It was such a shock as she had no symptoms and felt well.

To help keep my mum's spirits up, I really wanted to complete some sort of challenge for a charity and it had to be St Mark's.

From the very first appointment, through to the successful robotic surgery to remove the tumour, the team at St Mark's was fantastic. We are so lucky that St Mark's is our local hospital, and I wanted to say

thank you by running the Royal Parks Half Marathon!

It was one of the best days of my life and to have my friends, family and mum (who has made a full recovery!) supporting me the whole way was incredible.”

[Join Katie and Support Research at St Mark's](#)

A Warm Welcome to Diya, Our Newest Research Fellow

Diya Kapila is the newest clinical research fellow at St Mark's Hospital, pursuing a PhD funded by 40tude Curing Colon Cancer. Taking over the ICAN research project, a collaboration between St Mark's and The Institute of Cancer Research, Diya is looking to develop less-invasive ways to accurately predict cancer risk in patients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD).



Q: Can you give a brief overview of the research you'll be working on? How does it feel taking over such a longstanding project?

People living with IBD affecting their large bowel have around twice the risk of developing colorectal cancer, so many patients enter long-term colonoscopy surveillance programmes. The challenge is accurately identifying who is truly at highest risk – because the decisions that follow, whether intensive surveillance or major surgery, are life-changing.

The research builds on work by Professor Trevor Graham and his team, who have identified a genomic marker measuring DNA copy number changes that appears highly accurate in predicting cancer risk. The exciting next step is exploring whether this could be detected through less invasive methods – like blood or stool tests – making surveillance more personalised for patients in the future.

There's real momentum behind this work. It's the result of years of dedication from researchers, clinicians, and patients across St Mark's and the Institute of Cancer Research. I feel a real sense of gratitude to everyone who has contributed to getting us to this point, and a genuine

excitement about what we can achieve from here.

Q: What excites you most about your research at St Mark's? What are you most looking forward to?

What excites me most is the translational potential – the ability to ask a research question and see it shape real clinical practice for patients. The questions we ask in research come directly from patients' experiences, which makes the work feel meaningful and relevant.

The collaborative culture within the multidisciplinary team at St Mark's feels different. There's a shared purpose here that I find really energising.

[Read the Full Interview with Diya Here](#)

Simon's Bowel Cancer Story



In March 2023, Simon was unexpectedly diagnosed with bowel cancer. This news came completely out of the blue for Simon and his family.

Diagnosed at the age of 41, Simon represents the growing number of younger people getting bowel cancer

before the age of 50. Thirty days after his diagnosis, Simon was admitted to St Mark's Hospital for an operation to remove part of his colon. The treatment at St Mark's put Simon on the road to recovery, and he has now been in remission for over two and a half years.

This past October, Simon and his friends, Andy, John and Luke, took part in Battle Cancer London and raised an incredible £9,210. They decided to participate in all three incredibly arduous challenges during the event, including a 15km relay, a 1-hour team deadlift, and a 9-station metabolic conditioning workout.



We greatly appreciate the team's dedication to supporting research, education, and innovation at St Mark's Hospital and for making a difference in the lives of individuals affected by complex, and rare, bowel diseases.

This month, you too can help us fight back against bowel cancer. Make a donation, take on a physical challenge, or organise your own fundraiser for St Mark's Hospital Foundation.

[Upcoming Challenge Events for St Mark's](#)

Boomers Project: Spotlight on Pebs



Pebs Edwards

“Early onset bowel cancer is a growing concern to many, and we want to get answers.”

According to The Institute of Cancer Research, bowel cancer diagnoses among younger people under age 50 are expected to double between 2010 and 2030. Research using archived St Mark's tumour samples dating back to the 1950s could tell us why.

The 'Boomers' research programme is a collaboration between St Mark's and Professor Trevor Graham at the Institute of Cancer Research and supported by 40tude Curing Colon Cancer. St Mark's has the largest collection of tissue samples in the world, and the project uses

these samples to see what environmental factors could be causing an increase in early-onset bowel cancer cases.

St Mark's research fellow, Dr Pebs Edwards, is responsible for determining which samples are the right ones to include in the study and take to the lab for processing. Of the project's recent national (and international) media coverage, she said:

“ It's been really amazing to see the level of public interest and engagement. Early onset bowel cancer is a growing concern to many, and we want to get answers. The coverage has helped raise awareness but, also reinforces how important it is that we continue to do research in a way that is collaborative, rigorous and patient focused. ”

Research and education at St Mark's Hospital are central to improving clinical care and outcomes for patients with bowel cancer. Thanks to our generous supporters, St Mark's Hospital Foundation is able to fund the cost of around 30 research fellows, like Pebs, every year.

[Learn More About the Boomers Project](#)

Meet Our New Mascot!



Between 1835 and 1851, Frederick Salmon's specialist charity hospital saw an increased demand for treatments and growing recognition within medical circles. This resulted in the construction of a new site at City Road, Islington. The official opening of the new hospital building took place on

the feast day of St Mark, on the 25th April 1853. The renamed 'St Mark's Hospital for Fistula and other Diseases of the Rectum' selected the winged lion, the symbol of their namesake, as their new mascot and logo.

Our new St Mark's Hospital Foundation mascot, Freddie, pays tribute to this history. The mascot costume was generously donated by ByCentral Limited, the company responsible for overseeing the management and maintenance of the Central Middlesex Hospital site.

Stop by St Mark's at Central Middlesex Hospital during one of our upcoming events to meet Freddie!

Thank you for supporting research, education and innovation at St Mark's, the UK's national bowel hospital.

[Donate to St Mark's Hospital Foundation](#)



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