MEDIA RELEASE

Colorectal cancer – the young and the dangerous

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A study in Western Sydney has discovered younger patients diagnosed with colorectal cancer present with more advanced disease with worse pathological features.

The six-year study, conducted at five different hospitals by Dr Kar Yin Fok reviewed more than 1,350 patients and analysed the differences between younger and older age groups in terms of demographics, histopathology, tumour stage and nodal status.

The study revealed younger patients (patients less than 50 years of age) were more likely to be female (55 per cent v 46 per cent) and were more likely to have left-sided colon or rectal disease (70 per cent v 62 per cent).

Significantly more patients in the younger group had macroscopic tumour rupture at the time of resection (15 per cent v 8 per cent). Microscopically they were also significantly more likely to have T4 stage tumours (40 per cent v 30 per cent) and perineural invasion (30 per cent v 22 per cent).

A greater proportion of younger patients presented with nodal metastases (55 per cent v 46 per cent) and from this group younger patients had a significantly higher mean number of involved nodes (2.79 v 1.88).

Dr Fok said the Western Sydney study supported a worldwide trend that has seen the incidence of colorectal cancer increasing in the younger population.

“The success of the Bowel Cancer Screening Program has seen colorectal cancer rates slowly decline for people aged 50 years and above,” Dr Fok said.

“Despite the decline, Australia still has one of the highest colon cancer rates in the world.

“Younger people need to be mindful and aware of the symptoms, particularly bleeding, weight loss and bowel habit changes and act immediately if they suspect something is wrong.”

In conjunction with Dr Ewan Macdermid, Dr James Pasch, Mr Lachlan Pasch, Dr Chatika Premaratne, Mr Krishna Kotecha, Dr Walid Barto and Dr Toufic El-Khoury, Dr Fok will present their research at the Royal Australasian College of Surgeon’s 87th Annual Scientific Congress which is being held in Sydney between 7-11 May. The congress brings together some of the top surgical and medical minds from across New Zealand, Australia, and the rest of the world.

For more information about the Annual Scientific Congress please visit: https://asc.surgeons.org/

About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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