BOWEL CANCER SCREENING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland currently screens for bowel cancer using FOBT (Faecal Occult Blood Test) but there is a better test – FIT (Faecal Immunochemical Test) – which was recommended by the UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) in January 2016.

THE CURRENT STATUS:

- Test used is FOBT
- Around 1,200 bowel cancer cases every year
- Around 430 bowel cancer deaths every year
- Screening every 2 years for people aged 60–74
- Screening uptake is only 50%

WHY FIT IS BETTER

1. More sensitive to lower concentrations of blood meaning detection is more reliable and at earlier stage
2. Single faecal sample which markedly increases participation rates
3. Result can be measured more reliably using an automated process
4. Cost effective alternative

We want the Northern Ireland government to commit to replace FOBT with FIT.

Bowel scope (another test recommended by the UKNSC) could be introduced alongside FIT as a one-off test for everyone at age 55. It is particularly beneficial in detecting early-stage cancers and pre-cancerous growths and can prevent cancer and reduce deaths.

Source: cruk.org/cancerstats
Uptake data for FY2012/13, for persons aged 60-69 with a complete screening test result available [six months after the initial invitation pack is issued] from Public Health Agency Northern Ireland.

LET'S BEAT CANCER SOONER
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