

Ref. No: 1730
Date: 07/05/25
Subject: Colorectal Cancer Trends in Postpartum Women

REQUEST

Subject: Freedom of Information Request – Colorectal Cancer Trends in Postpartum Women.

I apologise for the impersonal nature of this letter, but the urgent need to address a 171.4% surge in colorectal cancer among postpartum women, as reported by United Lincolnshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (FOI Ref: 884/24), requires immediate action. My wife, Sharon Plummer, was diagnosed with stage 4 sigmoid adenocarcinoma on 20 September 2023, nine months postpartum, and died 31 days later on 21 October 2023, aged 39, leaving our daughter, Jemima. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I request data to understand these trends and protect other young mothers. Please provide the following information in a tabulated format for two periods: 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2020 (pre-COVID vaccine rollout) and 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2024 (post-rollout). If exact figures are low (e.g., <5), provide a range (e.g., 1–2, 3–4) or confirm zero cases. All patient data should be anonymised.

Primary Requests

1. Stage 3 or 4 Colorectal Cancer in Postpartum Women (2017–2020): For female patients under 45 years old diagnosed with stage 3 or 4 colorectal/bowel cancer (any subtype, e.g., sigmoid adenocarcinoma) who were postpartum (having given birth within 12 months prior to diagnosis): a. Total number diagnosed. b. Number who died within 12 months of diagnosis (exact number or range if <5). c. Total number of deaths up to 31 December 2020. d. Survival duration (in months) from diagnosis to death for each deceased case (anonymised).
2. Stage 3 or 4 Colorectal Cancer in Postpartum Women (2021–2024): The same data as above (1a–1d) for female patients under 45 diagnosed with stage 3 or 4 colorectal/bowel cancer who were postpartum, except total deaths (2c) up to 31 December 2024.
3. All Stage 3 or 4 Cancers (2017–2020): For all patients (all ages, all genders) diagnosed with stage 3 or 4 cancer (any type): a. Total number diagnosed. b. Number who died within 12 months of diagnosis (exact number or range if <5). c. Total number of deaths up to 31

December 2020. d. Survival duration (in months) from diagnosis to death for each deceased case (anonymised).

4. All Stage 3 or 4 Cancers (2021–2024): The same data as above (3a–3d) for patients diagnosed with stage 3 or 4 cancer (any type), except total deaths (4c) up to 31 December 2024.

Supplementary Requests

To investigate potential contributing factors (e.g., diagnostic delays, environmental triggers), please provide the following anonymised details for patients in Requests 1 and 2 (postpartum women under 45 with stage 3 or 4 colorectal cancer):

5. COVID-19 Vaccination Status: If available, provide: a. Number of patients vaccinated (anonymised). b. Vaccine type (e.g., Pfizer, AstraZeneca) and number of doses. c. Timing of vaccination relative to pregnancy or diagnosis (e.g., pre-pregnancy, during pregnancy, post-diagnosis).
6. Diagnosis Timing: Month and year of diagnosis for each case (anonymised).

Concerning the Stage and Progression of Cancer: The cancer stage at the time of diagnosis (Stage 3 or 4) for each case (anonymised). If any cases were initially diagnosed at Stage 1 or 2 but later progressed to Stage 3 or 4, please indicate the number of such cases.

7. Treatment and Outcomes: Whether patients received treatment (e.g., surgery, chemotherapy) and outcomes (e.g., remission, progression, death), anonymised.
8. Genetic Testing or Biopsy Analysis: Whether cases underwent tumour genetic testing (e.g., APC, P53, MMR, KRAS, BRAF) or biopsy analysis for contaminants (e.g., SV40 promoter, plasmid ORI, spike protein). If so, provide anonymised results (e.g., mutation types, presence of contaminants).
9. Reporting and Referrals: a. Whether cases or deaths were reported to the MHRA (e.g., Yellow Card scheme) or MBRRACE-UK. b. Whether deaths were referred to the coroner, including number and reasons (anonymised)

RESPONSE

St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (STHK) and Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust (S&O) became a single legal entity known as Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust on 1st July 2023, as such parts of the response may be provided in two sections relating to the hospital sites of each of the legacy organisations.

1. Stage 3 or 4 Colorectal Cancer in Postpartum Women (2017–2020):
For female patients under 45 years old diagnosed with stage 3 or 4 colorectal/bowel cancer (any subtype, e.g., sigmoid adenocarcinoma) who were postpartum (having given birth within 12 months prior to diagnosis)::

- a. Total number diagnosed:

STHK	S&O
0	0

- b. Number who died within 12 months of diagnosis (exact number or range if <5)

No patients were identified therefore not applicable.

- c. Total number of deaths up to 31 December 2020. d. Survival duration (in months) from diagnosis to death for each deceased case (anonymised).

No patients were identified therefore not applicable.

2. Stage 3 or 4 Colorectal Cancer in Postpartum Women (2021–2024):
The same data as above (1a–1d) for female patients under 45 diagnosed with stage 3 or 4 colorectal/bowel cancer who were postpartum, except total deaths (2c) up to 31 December 2024.

- a. Total number diagnosed:

STHK	S&O
<5	0

- b. Number who died within 12 months of diagnosis (exact number or range if <5)

Due to low number of cases, this information is suppressed.

c. Total number of deaths up to 31 December 2020. d. Survival duration (in months) from diagnosis to death for each deceased case (anonymised).

Due to low number of cases, this information is suppressed.

3. All Stage 3 or 4 Cancers (2017–2020): For all patients (all ages, all genders) diagnosed with stage 3 or 4 cancer (any type): a. Total number diagnosed. b. Number who died within 12 months of diagnosis (exact number or range if <5). c. Total number of deaths. d. Survival duration (in months) from diagnosis to death for each deceased case (anonymised)

For Q (d) response please see appendix 1

		2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
a	Cancers Diagnosed	855	698	848	769	3170
b	Died in 12 months	429	336	435	343	1543
c	Died	693	527	625	531	2376

Note: question b is a sub-set of question c.

4. All Stage 3 or 4 Cancers (2021–2024): The same data as above (3a–3d) for patients diagnosed with stage 3 or 4 cancer (any type), except total deaths (4c) up to 31 December 2024

		2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
a	Cancers Diagnosed	813	943	882	901	3539
b	Died in 12 months	374	463	403	344	1584
c	Died	573	644	498	361	2076

Note: question b is a sub-set of question c.

Supplementary Requests

To investigate potential contributing factors (e.g., diagnostic delays, environmental triggers), please provide the following anonymised details for patients in Requests 1 and 2 (postpartum women under 45 with stage 3 or 4 colorectal cancer):

5. COVID-19 Vaccination Status: If available, provide: a. Number of patients vaccinated (anonymised). b. Vaccine type (e.g., Pfizer, AstraZeneca) and number of doses. c. Timing of vaccination relative to

pregnancy or diagnosis (e.g., pre-pregnancy, during pregnancy, post-diagnosis).

Number suppressed therefore unable to provide information

6. Diagnosis Timing: Month and year of diagnosis for each case (anonymised).

Number suppressed therefore unable to provide information

Concerning the Stage and Progression of Cancer: The cancer stage at the time of diagnosis (Stage 3 or 4) for each case (anonymised). If any cases were initially diagnosed at Stage 1 or 2 but later progressed to Stage 3 or 4, please indicate the number of such cases.

7. Treatment and Outcomes: Whether patients received treatment (e.g., surgery, chemotherapy) and outcomes (e.g., remission, progression, death), anonymised.
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9. Reporting and Referrals: a. Whether cases or deaths were reported to the MHRA (e.g., Yellow Card scheme) or MBRRACE-UK. b. Whether deaths were referred to the coroner, including number and reasons (anonymised)

Unable to respond to 7,8,9. This is due to the Trust being mandated to record the stage of disease at diagnosis only. This is in line with nationally mandated cancer registry data requirements.

Appendix 1

A. Survival duration (in months) from diagnosis to death for each deceased case (anonymised) diagnosed between 01.01.17 and 31.12.20

B. Survival duration (in months) from diagnosis to death for each deceased case (anonymised) diagnosed between 01.01.21 and 31.12.24

A.

Cancer Site	Total
1 month	470
2 months	258
3 months	172
4 months	126
5 months	84
6 months	79
7 months	63
8 months	79
9 months	63
10 months	39
11 months	53
12 months	57
13 months	36
14 months	48
15 months	33
16 months	32
17 months	44
18 months	24
19 months	29
20 months	29
21 months	22
22 months	27
23 months	18
24 months	26
25 months	20
26 months	18
27 months	20
28 months	17
29 months	15
30 months	13
31 months	20
32 months	9
33 months	10
34 months	17
35 months	14
36 months	5
37 months	12
38 months	<5
39 months	7
40 months	9
41 months	7
42 months	10
43 months	8
44 months	9
45 months	6
46 months	<5
47 months	7
48 months	<5
49 months	<5
50 months	5
51 months	<5
52 months	<5
53 months	<5
54 months	6
55 months	5
56 months	<5
57 months	<5
58 months	<5
59 months	<5
60 months	<5
61 months	<5
62 months	5
63 months	<5
64 months	<5
65 months	5
66 months	<5
67 months	<5
68 months	<5
69 months	<5
71 months	<5
72 months	<5
74 months	<5
77 months	<5
Total	2376

B.

Cancer Site	Grand Total
1 month	469
2 months	302
3 months	192
4 months	117
5 months	90
6 months	87
7 months	70
8 months	62
9 months	48
10 months	58
11 months	46
12 months	43
13 months	51
14 months	36
15 months	40
16 months	31
17 months	39
18 months	28
19 months	26
20 months	29
21 months	17
22 months	15
23 months	20
24 months	16
25 months	14
26 months	16
27 months	9
28 months	10
29 months	10
30 months	8
31 months	8
32 months	9
34 months	<5
35 months	11
36 months	6
37 months	6
38 months	<5
39 months	<5
40 months	7
41 months	<5
42 months	<5
43 months	<5
44 months	<5
45 months	<5
46 months	<5
47 months	<5
49 months	<5
50 months	<5
51 months	<5
53 months	<5
56 months	<5
Total	2076