

Salivary Gland Cancer

Could gene profiling help you?



What is gene profiling?

Advances in medicine mean salivary gland cancers can be tested to discover the detail of the genetic code of the tumour. This is sometimes called *tumour profiling* or *genomic testing*.

Some tumours develop genetic markers which we can identify and which can help us treat that tumour.

A sample of your tumour is tested at an NHS lab to look for particular genetic markers. The result is called a gene profile and this is sent to your doctor. Depending on what the report shows, this could help you and your doctors in a number of ways:

- ▶ A standard approved drug treatment may be available on the NHS
- ▶ Drugs that work on specific tumour profiles have been proven to show they help patients live longer or have less side effects than other treatments
- ▶ A drug treatment that is still being tested may be accessible via a clinical trial. Clinical trials determine if new drugs do help stop the tumour growing or not. These treatments are not yet approved for general use and are only offered to some patients.

The information in your gene profile may help highlight the risk of recurrence of the cancer following surgery or radiotherapy. This can be helpful when planning what follow-up to arrange after surgery and when making personal or practical plans in the future.



“what’s really important for me is driving forward, looking for research”



“Salivary Gland Cancer UK has been really good...to be able to meet people who have been through the same as me”



“I got home and I went for a run, it was the only way I could deal with it at that point”

Types of salivary gland cancers

Salivary gland cancers start in the head and neck and in other parts of the body. They usually grow in the salivary glands in the side of the face and under the jaw bone. Sometimes, the same type of cancer can arise in other parts of the body like the airways, skin, tear ducts and breast and these are often called salivary gland type cancers.

There are around 25 types of salivary gland cancers. Your treatment will vary depending on which type of salivary cancer you have:

- ▶ There are many ways of typing a tumour
- ▶ Symptoms, scans and cells can help to tell which tumour type is present
- ▶ Gene profiling is a more recent way of typing.

Medical teams use lots of different ways to build a detailed picture of each patient. These include the history of symptoms before diagnosis, what the cancer looks like on scans and how it looks under a microscope.

Finding the exact tumour type can be difficult in salivary gland cancer – if you want to know more, scan the QR code on the right using your phone or click on the link.

How does this help?

If the profile of your tumour means it is suitable for treatment by an existing drug, or shows that you could be a good candidate for a drug trial, it could help improve your prognosis.

Understanding more about salivary gland cancer is the best way to develop new and better treatments that help more people live longer and be cured of this disease.

Changes in the makeup of the cells within a tumour may be the reason for it growing. Some drug treatments can find these specific changes, and stop tumours growing and make them shrink.

“ I keep up with all the research, and I'm very involved. ”



“ Cancer made me look at what's important, family, friends and living my life ”



Link: Salivary gland cancer diagnosis

Tailoring a treatment or an existing drug to attack the makeup of your particular tumour is known as *personalised medicine*.

Studies on patient tumour and blood samples allow researchers and medical teams to get as much information as possible from every single patient with salivary gland cancer. This helps us understand the differences between individual patients and use this understanding to develop new and better treatments for the future.

Donating a sample of your tumour will also help other patients in the years to come. The greater the number of samples available to researchers, the better the chances of finding new, effective treatments.

What to do next...

There is also a national salivary gland cancer research programme at The Christie NHS Trust, a cancer centre in Manchester, and you can be involved. The Christie is building a library of salivary gland tumour samples, called a *biobank*.



You can donate your tumour to the biobank if you are undergoing or have had surgery anywhere in the UK to remove a salivary gland tumour. Even if your surgery was some time ago, your tumour sample can be used in gene profiling.

Research on patient biobank samples has been critical to developing new treatments for salivary gland cancer.

To learn more about the tumour biobank, scan the QR code on the right using your phone or click on the link.

To be involved and to place a sample of your tumour with the biobank, contact Dr Metcalf's Clinical Secretary Jennifer Hill: **Telephone: 0161 956 1167, Email: jenni.hill1@nhs.net**

“ It's nice to be able to talk to other people with this problem ”



Link: The Christie Biobank

Salivary Gland Cancer: Gene profiling

The video linked on the right features Dr Rob Metcalf talking about how tumour profiling works. To see the video, scan the QR code on the right using your phone or click on the link.



Link: How profiling works

Join the community

Salivary Gland Cancers are rare, with limited treatment options and patients face many challenges that are unique to these cancers.

The Salivary Gland Cancer Youtube channel features videos of patients, talking about their diagnosis and treatment. To see the videos, scan the QR code on the right using your phone or click on the link.



Link: Alison talks about her diagnosis, treatment and gene profiling her tumour

Salivary Gland Cancer UK is focussed on collaboration and bringing people together to address the unmet needs of patients and their supporters. Clinicians and patients working together to improve outcomes and driving forward research.

We host regular networking meetings, provide support and up-to-date information, and opportunities for members to input into research to drive things forward.

All of the people shown in this leaflet are real patients with salivary gland cancer.

You can join our network by signing up here:
www.salivaryglandcancer.uk



Email: hello@salivaryglandcancer.uk



Twitter: @SGCancerUK



Facebook: @SGCancerUK



Instagram: @sgcanceruk

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