Professor Rebecca Fitzgerald

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TITLE OF PRESENTATION: ***From population to personalised prevention of cancer: lessons from the oesophagus***

Abstract of presentation

Cancer is among the leading causes of death in Europe and worldwide. Cancer is dreaded because it can shorten life. However, most individuals who receive a cancer diagnosis also fear the lengthy and toxic treatment they may be given to cure or control the disease. Society and individuals therefore seek a more pro-active approach to diagnosing cancer earlier, at a stage when it can be treated more effectively and with fewer side effects. In this paradigm rather than a re-active symptom-based approach, individuals are invited to undergo tests to find cancer and treat it earlier, including before symptoms are apparent. There are many important considerations when developing and implementing early cancer tests that include the accuracy but also the accessibility to the population at risk, the psychological and practical consequences of a positive test as well as the cost-effectiveness. In this talk I will explore the opportunities and challenges of innovation in the early detection field illustrated by my own work on developing a new approach for the early detection of oesophageal cancer.

Biographical note

Rebecca Fitzgerald OBE is Professor of Cancer Prevention and Director of the Early Detection Institute at the University of Cambridge and practices medicine as Hon. Consultant in Gastroenterology and Cancer Medicine at Addenbrooke's Hospital. Rebecca also leads the Cambridge component of the CRUK International Alliance in Early Detection (ACED). Rebecca is a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences in the UK and was elected a member of EMBO in 2021. The focus of her research is to investigate the steps in malignant transformation in the oesophagus and stomach and to use this information to improve clinical early detection strategies. Her work to develop and implement the Cytosponge and related biomarker assays for detection of Barrett's oesophagus and associated dysplasia has been awarded a number of prizes including the Westminster Medal, an NHS Innovation prize and the Don Listwin Early Detection Prize. Rebecca has contributed to evidence reviews and policy work around screening including for the Department of Health in the UK and recently for the European Commission. Rebecca enjoys teaching and is a Fellow of Medical Sciences at Trinity College Cambridge.