From population to personalised prevention of cancer: lessons from the oesophagus

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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.