OESOPHAGEAL CANCER AWARENESS AND ANTICIPATED TIME TO HELP-SEEKING: RESULTS FROM A POPULATION-BASED SURVEY

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A Dutch population survey of 3,270 adults found only 11% could name dysphagia as an oesophageal cancer symptom unprompted and 48% recognized it when prompted, far below awareness of other cancer symptoms.

KEY POINTS

- When asked unprompted, only 11% of participants listed dysphagia as an oesophageal cancer symptom and 60% did not list any correct symptom.
- With prompted questions, 48% recognized dysphagia as a potential cancer symptom, compared to 78-94% recognition for symptoms of other cancer types such as bowel habit changes or breast lumps.
- Low awareness was significantly associated with male gender, lower education, living in a deprived neighbourhood, and non-western migration background.
- Participants who did not associate dysphagia with cancer were more likely to anticipate delayed help-seeking, with 15% stating they would consult after one month versus 11% among those who recognized the association.
- The authors conclude that targeted education campaigns may improve earlier help-seeking for oesophageal cancer symptoms.

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