



Bowel Cancer Awareness – Spotlight on Maggie Vance

Introduction

Bowel cancer can often be a sensitive issue to talk about. However, it is vital that we do so. As the fourth most common cancer in the UK, bowel cancer affects almost 44,000 people each year. Unfortunately, approximately 16,000 of those diagnosed lose their lives to this disease – meaning that 36% of people do not survive. Additionally, more than nine out of 10 cases are diagnosed in people over the age of 50. **Bowel cancer is statistically more prevalent in men, with one in 17 being diagnosed during their lifetime compared with one in 20 women.**

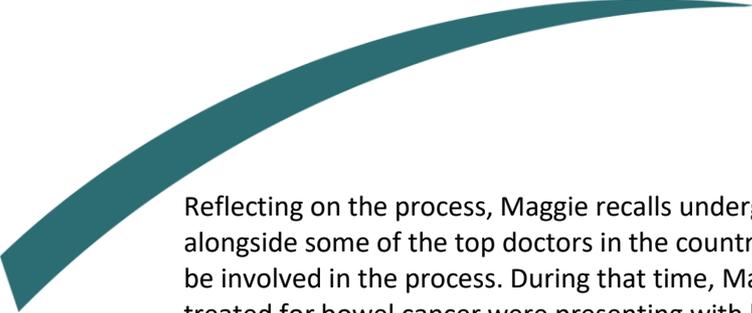
To mark Bowel Cancer Awareness Month, the Joint Advisory Group (JAG) on GI Endoscopy has released a podcast featuring Maggie Vance, a nurse consultant in gastroenterology. In the podcast, we discuss the JAG-approved Bowel Cancer Screening Programme (BCSP) and offer key signposting to promote bowel cancer awareness. This article addresses some of the topics discussed during the podcast interview with Maggie, emphasising the importance of raising bowel cancer awareness.

Getting to know Maggie Vance

Maggie Vance has worked at St Mark's Hospital, London, for over 26 years, and is a current member of the BCSA panel group as well as a BCSA screener.

Maggie has been involved in gastroenterology since 1994 – coincidentally, the same year that JAG was established – when she worked as a nurse on a gastroenterology ward. In the podcast, Maggie reflected on her introduction to endoscopy during her early career, working night shifts to care for acute gastrointestinal bleeding patients and assisting doctors with scoping procedures. This sparked Maggie's initial interest in endoscopy, inspiring her to pursue a career as an endoscopy nurse, before becoming one of the first endoscopists in the UK to start scoping in 1997.

In 2005, Maggie was involved in the pilot of what is today known as the JAG-accredited Bowel Cancer Screening Accreditation (BCSA) programme, which took place at St Mark's Hospital, London. **In doing so, she became the first woman and nurse to be accredited on the programme, all while being 6.5 months pregnant – a proud achievement for Maggie.**



Reflecting on the process, Maggie recalls undergoing accreditation in 2005 while working alongside some of the top doctors in the country. She acknowledges that it was amazing to be involved in the process. During that time, Maggie notes that many individuals being treated for bowel cancer were presenting with late-stage colorectal cancer, resulting in low survival rates. In the podcast, she discusses the discovery of precursor lesions known as 'polyps'. Maggie explains that if diagnosed and removed, polyps can potentially remove or stop the development of cancer, highlighting the importance of this work.

Since 2005, Maggie has undertaken further research in bioscope and flexiscope trials, becoming an assessor and panel member for the BCSA and dedicating her career to bowel cancer research.

You can listen to the full podcast with Maggie on [Spotify](#)

If you have any questions or concerns regarding bowel cancer symptoms, please visit your local GP. For more information, go to [Bowel Cancer UK](#).

The opinions expressed in this article are those of the interviewee and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of JAG.