

The one in a million cancer

Monday 20 April, 2015

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Called the 'one in a million cancer' or the jelly belly disease', pseudomyxoma peritonei (PMP) is a rare cancer, which is now thought to affect around 3 or 4 people per million each year, although statistics vary.

Usually, it starts with a small growth in the appendix, known as a polyp. More rarely, it starts in other parts of the bowel, the ovary or bladder.

As the polyp grows, it eventually spreads through the wall of the organ where it started. Cancerous cells are then spread to the lining of the abdominal cavity - the peritoneum. These cancerous cells produce mucus, which collects in the abdomen as a jelly-like fluid called mucin. The mucin starts to fill the abdominal cavity, spreading cancerous cells. These cells seed on the surface of organs and develop into more tumours.

There is currently no known cause of PMP. In the early stages, there are often no symptoms. Later, the symptoms are similar to those of many other diseases making the disease difficult to diagnose. The most common symptoms are:

- Abdominal swelling or an increase in abdominal girth
- Changes in bowel habit
- Loss of appetite
- Pelvic or abdominal pain
- General fatigue
- Bowel irritation

Audrey Hepburn is one of history's most iconic actresses, style icons and Humanitarian Ambassadors. She lost her fight to pseudomyxoma adenocarcinoma cancer on January 20th 1993, aged just 63, yet her elegance and style will live on forever. Today, her diagnosis would have been pseudomyxoma peritonei (PMP).

Find out more: <http://www.pseudomyxomasurvivor.org>

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