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**Understanding the malignant potential of gastric metaplasia of the oesophagus and its relevance to Barrett’s oesophagus surveillance**

*Black E, Ococks E, Devonshire G*, et al.[*Understanding the malignant potential of gastric metaplasia of the oesophagus and its relevance to Barrett’s oesophagus surveillance: individual-level data analysis.*](https://gut.bmj.com/content/73/5/729)Gut *2024; 73: 729-740. doi: 10.1136/gutjnl-2023-330721.*

Barrett’s oesophagus (BE) is characterised by a columnar-lined oesophageal epithelium. In the UK, gastric or intestinal metaplastic glands enable a diagnosis of BE and require surveillance. However, questions remain around the malignant potential of gastric metaplasia (GM). Consequently, Black et al., conducted a retrospective analysis from a prospective database at Addenbrooke’s Hospital (Cambridge, UK) among patients undergoing BE surveillance. By looking at a selected cohort of 244 patients, they used both clinical and genomic evidence to determine the malignant potential of GM.

At index, there were 77 patients with short-segment (SS)-GM (i.e., < 3 cm), 23 with long-segment (LS)-GM, and 144 with SS-intestinal metaplasia (IM). During the entire follow-up, patients were classed as GM-only, GM+IM or IM-only. The presence of GM+IM is representative of progression to IM or mis-sampling at index endoscopy, which was more commonly seen in LS-GM (61% vs. 25%). Over a median follow-up of 7.2 years covering 1854 person-years, there was no progression to dysplasia or oesophageal adenocarcinoma (OAC) in GM-only cases compared to 11 cases in IM-only. Subsequently, Black et al., conducted a series of genomic analyses using both whole exome and genome sequencing. These eloquently showed that GM was associated with a significantly lower mutational burden compared to IM in 41 selected cases. Using a separate cohort of 119 patients with previously resected OAC, they also showed that adjacent GM-only BE had very few mutations in early IM/OAC genes and very few shared driver gene mutations.

Taken collectively, this paper demonstrates surveillance may not be necessary in SS-GM given the low rate of progression and molecular distinction from BE-IM.