

2 **Subsequent Primary Malignancies in Patients with**  
3 **Nonmelanoma Skin Cancer in England: A National Record-**  
4 **Linkage Study**

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7 **Abstract**

8 **Background:** Conflicting evidence exists about whether people with a history of nonmelanoma skin cancer  
9 (NMSC) are at higher risk of subsequent primary malignant cancers than those without.

10 **Methods:** An all England record-linked hospital and mortality dataset spanning from 1999 to 2011 was used.  
11 We constructed two cohorts: one that comprised people with a history of NMSC (502,490 people), and a control  
12 cohort that comprised people without. We "followed up" these two cohorts electronically to determine  
13 observed and expected numbers of people with subsequent primary cancers in each, based on person-years  
14 at risk, and calculated standardized risk ratios (RR).

15 **Results:** Comparing the NMSC cohort with the non-NMSC cohort, the RR for all subsequent malignant  
16 cancers combined was 1.36 [95% confidence interval (CI), 1.35–1.37]. Significantly increased RRs ( $P < 0.05$ ) were  
17 found for 26 of the 29 cancer types studied, in particular for salivary gland, melanoma, bone, and upper  
18 gastrointestinal tract cancers. The RRs were also particularly high when comparing younger people with and  
19 without NMSC.

20 **Conclusions:** NMSC is strongly associated with a broad spectrum of other primary cancers, particularly in  
21 younger age groups. The pattern suggests a genetic or early-acquired etiologic association.

22 **Impact:** These results represent what can be done using very large, linked, routinely collected administrative  
23 datasets; but such datasets lack detail. Further work to establish the mechanisms behind these associations is  
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25 **Introduction**

26 Nonmelanoma skin cancer (NMSC) is the commonest  
27 malignancy in white populations, and its incidence is  
28 increasing (1, 2). The two key known mechanisms of  
29 cutaneous carcinogenesis are UV-induced genetic dam-  
30 age and suppression of skin immune tumor surveillance  
31 responses (3). UV exposure is considered to account for an  
32 increased risk of subsequent NMSC and melanoma in  
33 individuals after a first NMSC (4, 5).

34 There is conflicting literature on whether individuals  
35 with NMSC are at increased risk of developing primary  
36 malignancies that are not known to be associated with  
37 UV radiation. Comparatively large individual studies  
38 investigating this question include two local UK regis-

try-based studies (6, 7), a nationwide study in Finland  
(8), and a US prospective cohort study of health profes-  
sionals (9), all of which showed significant increases in a  
range of cancers after NMSC. Another UK registry-  
based study, however, showed no such increased risks  
and indeed significant risk reductions in certain cancers,  
including of the breast and prostate (10). Of two world-  
wide meta-analyses that have investigated the literature  
on NMSC and other cancers, one found that the risk of  
cervical, colon, gastric, and rectal cancers is significantly  
reduced in people with NMSC, and concluded that solar  
UVB radiation reduces the risk of many internal can-  
cers, with the likely mechanism being the protective  
effects of increased production of vitamin D (11); the  
other meta-analysis concluded that NMSC is associated  
with a significantly increased risk of a broad spectrum  
of subsequent malignancies (5). Certain cancers, such as  
salivary, have consistently been found to be particularly  
associated with NMSC (5, 11). Some evidence exists  
that second primary cancer risks are higher in younger  
individuals with NMSC than older (12), suggesting a  
genetic or early-acquired etiology.

We aimed to contribute to the literature by using a  
linked dataset covering the whole of England during the  
period from 1999 to 2011, making this the largest single  
epidemiologic study so far to investigate whether a

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71	history of NMSC is a significant risk factor for other	event. We then searched for specific outcome cancers	Q4	127
72	subsequent primary cancers.	individually within that range (listed in the t		128
73	<b>Materials and Methods</b>			
74	<b>Setting and dataset</b>	<b>Statistical analysis</b>		129
75	The dataset contained Hospital Episode Statistics	Both cohorts were stratified for analysis, by age in 5-		130
76	(administrative data routinely collected for each hospital	year groups, sex, calendar year of first recorded admis-		131
77	admission or episode of day-case care in all NHS hospi-	sion, region of residence, and quintile of patients' index		132
78	tals) and data on mortality, obtained from national death	of multiple deprivation (IMD) score (a measure of socioeco-		133
79	registrations, from January 1, 1999, to December 31, 2011.	nommic status widely used in England). We calculated the		134
80	The hospital data were supplied by the English National	observed incidence rate of individuals with each outcome		135
81	Information Centre for Health and Social Care and mortal-	cancer in each stratum of each of the two cohorts, based		136
82	ity data by the Office for National Statistics. Both	on person-days of "follow-up." "Date of entry" into each		137
83	sources of data contain diagnosis codes using the Inter-	cohort was the date of earliest record of NMSC or any		138
84	national Classification of Diseases 10th Revision (ICD-	one of the reference cohort conditions. "Date of exit" was		139
85	10). Successive records for each individual were linked	the date of the earliest subsequent record for the outcome		140
86	together to create a single dataset for analysis. The record	cancer, death, or the end of data collection period (Decem-		141
87	linkage was carried out by the Oxford record-linkage	ber 31, 2011).		142
88	group (13).	The indirect method of standardization was used, with		143
89	<b>Subjects</b>	the NMSC and reference cohorts taken together as the		144
90	A cohort was constructed comprising people with a	standard population. For analysis of each outcome cancer,		145
91	record of hospital day-case care or inpatient admission for	we applied the stratum-specific incidence rates that were		146
92	NMSC in which NMSC was the principal diagnosis on the	observed in the standard population to the number of		147
93	record, by identifying the earliest episode of day-case	people in each stratum of the NMSC cohort and then,		148
94	care, or inpatient admission, for the condition in an NHS	separately, to those in the reference cohort, to obtain the		149
95	hospital during the study period (the "NMSC cohort").	expected number of people with the outcome cancer in		150
96	NMSC was defined using code C44 in the 10th revision of	each stratum of the NMSC and reference cohort. Observed		151
97	the International Classification of Diseases (ICD).	(O) and expected (E) numbers for each stratum were then		152
98	A "reference cohort" was constructed (as a control	summed to give total observed and expected numbers of		153
99	group) by identifying individuals with a record of hospi-	people with the outcome cancer in each of the cohorts.		154
100	tal day-case care or inpatient admission for various	We then compared the observed and expected numbers		155
101	other, mainly minor, medical and surgical conditions and	of people with the outcome cancer in the NMSC cohort		156
102	injuries (see footnote in Table 1). We selected a wide range	with those in the reference cohort, using the formula:		157
103	of different conditions, rather than relying on a narrow	$(O^{NMSC}/E^{NMSC}) : (O^{REF}/E^{REF})$ , where the $O_s$ and $E_s$ are		158
104	range (in case the latter are themselves atypical in their	the observed and expected numbers in the NMSC and		159
105	risk of subsequent disease). Any individual in the refer-	reference cohorts, respectively. The notation $(O^{NMSC}/$		160
106	ence cohort who was found to have a subsequent record of	$E^{NMSC})$ gives the calculation of relative risk in the NMSC		161
107	NMSC contributed person-days, first, to the reference	group, relative to the standard population; that of		162
108	cohort and were then placed into the NMSC cohort from	$(O^{REF}/E^{REF})$ , gives a calculation of relative risk in the		163
109	the exact date of the first record of NMSC, in which they	reference cohort, relative to the standard population; and		164
110	then contributed person-days to the NMSC cohort.	we termed the result, $(O^{NMSC}/E^{NMSC}) : (O^{REF}/E^{REF})$ , the		165
111	For each outcome cancer studied (below), we excluded	"risk ratio (RR)." The RR, its confidence interval, and $\chi^2$		166
112	anyone who had a record of that outcome cancer before, or	statistics for its significance were calculated using stan-		167
113	at the same time as, their record of the NMSC or reference	dard statistical methods (14).		168
114	cohort condition, so as to establish the correct chronology	We used stratification, rather than matching, for the		169
115	of events for the investigation of NMSC as a potential risk	variables of age, sex, year, region, and deprivation to		170
116	factor for the subsequent outcome cancers.	maximize the availability of the data, statistical power,		171
117	<b>Outcomes</b>	and reduction of confounding. We did so because there is		172
118	The individuals in the NMSC cohort and reference	no merit in discarding data simply to have equal numbers		173
119	cohort were then "followed up" by searching the database	(e.g., 1:1 or 2:1 matching) in each subgroup. To illustrate,		174
120	for any subsequent NHS care for, or death from, other	in the age group 20 to 24 years there were 828 people in the		175
121	primary malignant cancers besides NMSC ("outcome	NMSC cohort, 506,141 in the reference cohort, and 506,969		176
122	cancers"), during the study period. We searched, first, for	in the combined "standard" cohort. The stratum-specific		177
123	any outcome cancer within the range ICD-10 C00–C41,	rates within the 506,969 people in the standard cohort are		178
124	C45–C75, and C81–C97, taking the earliest record of a	then applied to the numbers in each substratum in the		179
125	cancer event within that range as the individual's outcome	NMSC cohort and then the reference cohort. In this way,		180
		available data are maximized; statistical power is as high		181
		as it can be; there are adequate numbers to populate every		182

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**Table 1.** Age distribution of people with NMSC in the study, the percentage who were women, and the number and age distribution of people in the reference cohort<sup>a</sup>

England (1999–2011)			
Age at admission to the NMSC cohort	Number in the NMSC cohort (% of total)	% of Women	Number in the reference cohort
0–4	51 (<0.1)	63	589,344
5–9	119 (<0.1)	60	610,791
10–14	221 (<0.1)	53	492,236
15–19	417 (0.1)	56	466,250
20–24	813 (0.2)	60	506,114
25–29	1,773 (0.4)	58	517,977
30–34	3,618 (0.7)	55	498,316
35–39	6,602 (1.3)	55	507,940
40–44	11,041 (2.2)	54	487,475
45–49	15,988 (3.2)	52	458,286
50–54	23,497 (4.7)	49	469,656
55–59	33,157 (6.6)	46	499,147
60–64	47,141 (9.4)	43	514,123
65–69	58,452 (11.6)	41	499,152
70–74	70,951 (14.1)	41	501,378
75–79	80,465 (16)	43	484,323
80–84	72,375 (14.4)	47	369,574
85–120	75,809 (15.1)	57	315,431
All ages	502,490 (100)	46	8,787,513

<sup>a</sup>The reference cohort consisted of people admitted with the following conditions coded under the Office of Population, Censuses, and Surveys code (OPCS) edition 4 for operations and the ICD revision 10 for diagnoses: adenoidectomy (OPCS4 E20), tonsillectomy (F34 + F36), appendectomy (H01–H03), total hip replacement (W37–W39), total knee replacement (W40–W42), cataract (ICD 10 H25), squint (H49–H51), otitis externa/media (H60–H67), varicose veins (I83), hemorrhoids (I84), upper respiratory tract infections (J00–J06), deflected septum, nasal polyp (J33 + J34.2), impacted tooth and other disorders of teeth (K00–K03), inguinal hernia (K40), in growing toenail and other diseases of nail (L60), sebaceous cyst (L72.1), bunion (M20.1), internal derangement of knee (M23), superficial injury and contusion (S00, S10, S20, S30, S40, S50, S60, S70, S80, and S90), dislocations, sprains and strains (S03, S13, S23, S33, S43, S53, S63, S73, S83, and S93), head injury (S06), and selected limb fractures (S42, S52, S62, S82, and S92).

185 cell in the potential confounder data; and the resultant  
 186 RRs are adjusted, as much as all available data allow, in  
 187 respect of age, sex, year, region, and deprivation.

188<sup>Q5</sup> We carried out subanalyses by the age group and time  
 189 interval, splitting results by age at first admission for the  
 190 NMSC or reference cohort condition (grouped as <24, 25–  
 191 44, 45–59, and 60+) by time interval between the  
 192 event of first admission for NMSC (or the reference cohort  
 193 condition) and the event of the subsequent outcome  
 194 cancer (<1, 1–4, and 5+ years).

195 **Results**

196 Table 1 shows the number, age, and sex distribution of  
 197 people at entry to the NMSC cohort, and the number and  
 198 age distribution of people in the reference cohort. In total,  
 199 there were 502,490 people in the NMSC cohort and there  
 200 were 8,787,513 people in the reference cohort. The mean  
 201 period of follow-up in the NMSC cohort was 5.1 years; the  
 202 mean period of follow-up in the reference cohort was 6.0  
 203 years. Of note, 462 people who started in the reference  
 204 cohort later crossed over into the NMSC cohort. The RR,

comparing the NMSC cohort with the reference cohort, for  
 all outcome cancers combined in people across all ages  
 and all time intervals, was 1.36 (95% CI, 1.35–1.37). When  
 we excluded melanoma from the combined outcome  
 cancers range, the RR decreased but remained high at  
 1.27 (95% CI, 1.26–1.28). We found increased risks in 26 of  
 29 individual outcome cancers ( $P < 0.05$ ). The highest RRs  
 were found for salivary gland (5.78 and 5.29–6.32), mel-  
 anoma (5.54 and 5.37–5.71), bone (2.93 and 2.66–3.23), and  
 upper gastrointestinal tract malignancies (2.36 and 2.25–  
 2.48). Results for all individual outcome cancers are  
 shown in Table 2. NMSC was not found to be protective  
 against any cancer, but cervical, uterine, and testicular  
 cancers were not significantly elevated ( $P > 0.05$ ). Any  
 differences between males and females were small (Sup-  
 plementary Table S1).

**Results by age**

Table 3 and Table 4 show RRs for people ages <25, 25–  
 44, 45–59, and 60+ years at the time of entry to their cohort.  
 Generally, RRs for all outcome cancers decreased with

**Table 2.** Analysis by type of cancer: observed numbers of people with NMSC who had a subsequent record of primary malignant cancer, RRs and 95% CIs


Site (ICD-10 code)	Cancer following admission for NMSC	
	O	RR (95% CI)
Any malignant primary cancer excluding NMSC <sup>a</sup>	67,148	1.36 (1.35–1.37)
Any malignant primary cancer excluding all skin <sup>b</sup>	62,377	1.27 (1.26–1.28)
Bladder (C67)	5,372	1.13 (1.10–1.16)
Bone (C40–C41)	554	2.93 (2.66–3.23)
Brain (C71)	781	1.07 (1.00–1.16)
Breast (C50)	6,154	1.24 (1.21–1.28)
Cervix (C53)	193	0.97 (0.83–1.12)
Colon (C18–C19)	7,259	1.16 (1.13–1.19)
GI—upper (C00–C06.8, C09–C10, and C12–C14)	1,974	2.36 (2.25–2.48)
Kidney (C64–C65)	1,909	1.18 (1.13–1.24)
Larynx (C32)	649	1.32 (1.21–1.43)
Leukemia—lymphoid (C91)	2,096	2.01 (1.92–2.11)
Leukemia—myeloid (C92)	1,173	1.28 (1.21–1.37)
Liver (C22)	1,095	1.10 (1.03–1.17)
Lung (C33–C34)	10,942	1.31 (1.28–1.33)
Lymphoma—Hodgkins (C81)	298	1.68 (1.48–1.89)
Lymphoma—non-Hodgkin (C82–C85)	3,632	1.63 (1.58–1.69)
Melanoma—malignant (C43)	6,693	5.54 (5.37–5.71)
Multiple myeloma (C90)	1,225	1.13 (1.07–1.20)
Nasopharynx (C11)	98	1.48 (1.19–1.82)
Nervous system—other (C70)	62	1.91 (1.43–2.51)
Esophageal (C15)	2,274	1.10 (1.06–1.15)
Ovary (C56)	898	1.08 (1.01–1.16)
Pancreas (C25)	1,975	1.05 (1.00–1.10)
Prostate (C61)	11,730	1.12 (1.10–1.14)
Rectum (C20–C21)	3,529	1.43 (1.38–1.48)
Salivary gland (C07–C08)	881	5.78 (5.29–6.32)
Stomach (C16)	2,205	1.08 (1.04–1.13)
Testis (C62)	69	1.28 (0.99–1.62)
Thyroid (C73)	226	1.25 (1.08–1.43)
Uterus—body of (C54)	830	1.05 (0.98–1.13)

NOTE: All these ICD codes are specifically for primary malignancy.

<sup>a</sup>C00–C43, C45–C75, and C81–C97.

<sup>b</sup>C00–C41, C45–C75, and C81–C97.

228 increasing age but remained elevated throughout. Risk  
229 ratios for all outcome cancers combined at ages <25, 25–44,  
230 45–59, and 60+, respectively, were 22.6 (95% CI, 18.0–  
231 28.2), 3.52 (95% CI, 3.30–3.75), 1.74 (95% CI, 1.70–1.79), and  
232 1.32 (95% CI, 1.30–1.33).

233 Given that only 0.3% of the people in our NMSC cohort  
234 were under 25 years (Table 1)—a reflection of the fact that  
235 cancer incidence rates are very low in this age group  
236 generally—the observed and expected numbers of people  
237 in this age group with specific outcome cancers were small  
238 (usually less than 3), resulting in  statistical power  
239 and wider confidence interval s. We report, in Table 3, RRs  
240 for specific outcome cancers in which the observed or  
241 expected values in this age group were 3 or more in the  
242 NMSC cohort. The RR for melanoma and salivary gland

cancers were particularly high at 94.4 (95% CI, 65.3–133.0)  
and 93.4 (95% CI, 18.4–295.1), respectively.

### Short- (<1 year), medium- (1–4 years), and long-term (5+ years) associations

Table 5 shows results by time intervals between entry to the NMSC or reference cohort and the first cancer outcome event for each individual cancer. For most outcome cancers, the RRs were highest within the first year and, for most outcome cancers, the RRs decreased but remained significantly high for first cancer events at 1 to 4 years, and for first events after 5+ years. The RRs for several specific outcome cancers—of the bladder, brain, breast, colon, liver, lung, pancreas, prostate, and stomach—remained consistently elevated across all time intervals; some



**Table 3.** People younger than 25 years with NMSC who had a subsequent record of another cancer: observed numbers, RRs and 95% CIs

Site (ICD-10 code)	Ages 0-24	
	O	RR (95% CI)
Any malignant primary cancer excluding NMSC <sup>a</sup>	82	22.64 (17.97-28.16)
Any malignant primary cancer excluding all skin <sup>b</sup>	48	14.45 (10.63-19.19)
Bone (C40-C41)	9	53.43 (24.15-103.05)
Brain (C71)	4	20.18 (5.46-52.27)
Leukemia-lymphoid (C91)	5	26.75 (8.65-62.79)
Melanoma-malignant (C43)	37	94.41 (65.25-133.01)
Salivary gland (C07-C08)	3	93.44 (18.43-295.10)

<sup>a</sup>C00-C43, C45-C75, and C81-C97.<sup>b</sup>C00-C41, C45-C75, and C81-C97.

260 increased with increasing time (brain, colon, and  
261 prostate).

## 262 Discussion

### 263 Principal findings

264 A previous record of NMSC was associated with an  
265 increased subsequent risk of a broad spectrum of other  
266 primary malignant cancers in this national cohort study.  
267 Younger people with NMSC, in particular, are at much  
268 higher risk of subsequent primary malignant cancer inci-  
269 dence than people without NMSC, although cancer inci-  
270 dence is, overall, rarer in younger people.

### 271 Strengths, weaknesses, and potential biases

272 With 502,490 NMSC cases, this is the largest study on  
273 this topic so far, with high statistical power and precision  
274 in analyses split by cancer site, age, and time interval.

275 The main shortcoming is that we were unable to dis-  
276 tinguish squamous cell carcinomas (SCC) from basal cell  
277 carcinomas (BCC) because these cancers are coded togeth-  
278 er in the ICD. It might be that one type of NMSC is more  
279 strongly associated with increased risks of subsequent  
280 primaries; however, only subtle differences have been  
281 noted in studies that do differentiate SCCs and BCCs  
282 (5, 9). T-cell lymphomas should be coded separately, but  
283 might occasionally be miscoded as NMSC; however,  
284 given their rarity compared with SCCs and BCCs, any  
285 effect on our results is likely to be very small.

286 We have not adjusted for multiple comparisons of  
287 cancer sites, but because almost all of the RRs go in the  
288 same direction of excess risk, it is highly improbable that  
289 these are chance findings. The height of some of the RRs,  
290 and the ubiquity of elevated risk across so many cancer  
291 sites, is such that the associations are very unlikely to be  
292 attributable to artefacts of data collection or study design.

293 In our stratified analysis, we accounted for age, sex,  
294 calendar year of first recorded admission, region of res-  
295 idence, and IMD score, but were unable to adjust for other  
296 potential confounders like body mass index, smoking,  
297 and UV exposure. However, smoking-related cancers,

299 such as lung, had a RR of less than the average elevation  
300 of cancer site risk, and, after excluding melanoma from the  
301 analyses, the RRs for cancer overall were still significantly  
302 high, suggesting that factors other than smoking and UV  
303 exposure are at play. Studies that have been able to control  
304 for these potentially confounding variables have not  
305 found substantial difference between the age-adjusted  
306 and multivariable-adjusted risks, demonstrating that the  
307 observed association is unlikely to be explained by such  
308 factors (9). Furthermore, the effects of acquired risks, such  
309 as smoking and other behavioral factors, are cumulative,  
310 and one would expect an increasing relative risk with  
311 increasing age if they were major factors behind our  
312 associations. We found the opposite (higher relative risks  
313 at young ages), suggesting a genetic cause or early envi-  
314 ronmental exposure might explain our results rather than  
315 a later acquired cause of association.

316 It was not possible for us to directly ascertain the  
317 number of NMSC cases that were missed by our dataset.  
318 Most dermatologic excisions in ambulatory care should be  
319 captured under hospital day-case admissions (15), but  
320 some will be classified as outpatient and some will be  
321 treated wholly in primary care. The people admitted as a  
322 day case or inpatient may be at the more severe end of the  
323 diseases spectrum. It seems unlikely, however, that the  
324 profile of RRs seen in our study is attributable to missing  
325 cases of NMSC that are treated in primary care. Further-  
326 more, the decision to treat a person with NMSC as a day  
327 case or inpatient, rather than within primary care or as an  
328 outpatient, is perhaps more likely to relate to the prefer-  
329 ences of the treating clinician than the characteristics of the  
330 NMSC.

331 We do not have data on the cohorts' migration into or  
332 out of the study area. However, migration bias is unlikely  
333 to be an issue because there is no apparent reason why the  
334 migration pattern of one cohort would be significantly  
335 different from the other.

336 We examined associations at different time intervals  
337 between the first known record of NMSC and the first  
338 subsequent record of the outcome cancer. This was partly

**Table 4.** People ages 25–44, 45–64, and 65+ with NMSC who had a subsequent record of another cancer: observed numbers, RRs, and 95% CIs

Site (ICD-10 code)	Ages 25–44		Ages 45–59		Ages 60+	
	O	RR (95% CI)	O	RR (95% CI)	O	RR (95% CI)
Any malignant primary cancer excluding NMSC <sup>a</sup>	1,001	3.52 (3.30–3.75)	5,787	1.74 (1.70–1.79)	60,278	1.32 (1.30–1.33)
Any malignant primary cancer excluding all skin <sup>b</sup>	674	2.47 (2.29–2.67)	4,951	1.52 (1.47–1.56)	56,704	1.25 (1.24–1.26)
Bladder (C67)	20	2.30 (1.39–3.58)	213	1.12 (0.97–1.29)	5,139	1.13 (1.10–1.16)
Bone (C40–C41)	32	12.19 (8.13–17.73)	84	4.38 (3.42–5.56)	429	2.66 (2.37–2.98)
Brain (C71)	24	2.03 (1.29–3.04)	92	1.36 (1.09–1.69)	661	1.02 (0.93–1.10)
Breast (C50)	174	1.79 (1.53–2.08)	853	1.25 (1.17–1.34)	5,127	1.23 (1.20–1.27)
Cervix (C53)	12	1.31 (0.67–2.30)	23	0.99 (0.62–1.50)	157	0.94 (0.79–1.10)
Colon (C18–C19)	21	1.20 (0.74–1.84)	395	1.30 (1.17–1.44)	6,841	1.15 (1.12–1.18)
GI—upper (C00–C06.8, C09–C10, and C12–C14)	52	4.42 (3.28–5.86)	354	2.62 (2.34–2.93)	1,567	2.34 (2.21–2.48)
Kidney (C64–C65)	14	1.59 (0.86–2.68)	148	1.32 (1.11–1.56)	1,747	1.17 (1.11–1.23)
Larynx (C32)	2	0.81 (0.10–2.99)	85	1.57 (1.24–1.96)	562	1.30 (1.18–1.42)
Leukemia—lymphoid (C91)	10	2.97 (1.41–5.55)	90	1.73 (1.38–2.15)	1,991	2.06 (1.96–2.17)
Leukemia—myeloid (C92)	10	2.05 (0.98–3.82)	59	1.31 (0.99–1.70)	1,103	1.28 (1.20–1.37)
Liver (C22)	5	1.53 (0.49–3.62)	81	1.32 (1.04–1.65)	1,009	1.08 (1.01–1.16)
Lung (C33–C34)	34	1.95 (1.35–2.75)	787	1.74 (1.61–1.87)	10,121	1.28 (1.26–1.31)
Lymphoma—Hodgkins (C81)	10	1.87 (0.89–3.47)	52	2.16 (1.59–2.87)	236	1.65 (1.42–1.90)
Lymphoma—non-Hodgkin (C82–C85)	28	1.80 (1.19–2.61)	318	1.90 (1.69–2.14)	3,285	1.63 (1.57–1.69)
Melanoma—malignant (C43)	377	20.63 (18.36–23.13)	1,040	9.40 (8.72–10.13)	5,239	5.08 (4.90–5.27)
Multiple myeloma (C90)	4	1.33 (0.36–3.46)	65	1.14 (0.87–1.46)	1,156	1.13 (1.06–1.21)
Nasopharynx (C11)	1	0.62 (0.02–3.52)	28	2.28 (1.49–3.38)	69	1.33 (1.01–1.72)
Nervous system—other (C70)	3	7.85 (1.53–25.33)	5	1.67 (0.52–4.13)	53	1.84 (1.33–2.51)
Esophageal (C15)	12	1.98 (1.01–3.49)	157	1.19 (1.01–1.40)	2,105	1.10 (1.05–1.15)
Ovary (C56)	16	1.54 (0.88–2.53)	92	1.06 (0.85–1.31)	788	1.08 (1.00–1.16)
Pancreas (C25)	9	2.24 (1.01–4.32)	103	1.07 (0.87–1.31)	1,862	1.05 (1.00–1.10)
Prostate (C61)	9	1.72 (0.78–3.29)	493	1.21 (1.10–1.32)	11,228	1.12 (1.09–1.14)
Rectum (C20–C21)	105	10.68 (8.60–13.15)	423	2.59 (2.33–2.87)	2,999	1.29 (1.24–1.35)
Salivary gland (C07–C08)	19	12.34 (7.20–20.05)	70	5.98 (4.51–7.84)	789	6.33 (5.71–7.02)
Stomach (C16)	13	2.70 (1.43–4.68)	89	1.08 (0.86–1.34)	2,102	1.08 (1.03–1.13)
Testis (C62)	7	1.00 (0.40–2.07)	18	1.58 (0.92–2.54)	43	1.26 (0.89–1.76)
Thyroid (C73)	10	1.30 (0.62–2.40)	36	1.44 (0.99–2.02)	179	1.22 (1.03–1.42)
Uterus—body of (C54)	10	1.58 (0.75–2.95)	105	1.06 (0.86–1.29)	715	1.05 (0.97–1.13)

<sup>a</sup>C00–C43, C45–C75, and C81–C97.<sup>b</sup>C00–C41, C45–C75, and C81–C97.

341 to judge any effect of surveillance bias. This would arise if, 342 for example, care for NMSC led to the prompt identifica- 343 tion of another cancer. For all primary outcome cancers 344 combined, the RR decreased after the first year, but 345 remained significantly high. Increased surveillance might 346 partially account for the increased rates of melanoma, but 347 is unlikely to account for the increased rates of other 348 nonvisible internal cancers, particularly in which the 349 increased risk continues beyond 5 years after the diagno- 350 sis of NMSC, as was the case with most outcome cancers.

351 We cannot rule out the possibility of some misclassifica- 352 tion of secondary cancer sites as primary in the source 353 data, although we selected ICD codes for primary cancers 354 only. We are unable to link our records to histologic 355 samples. If misclassification of secondary cancers were 356 an explanation for the pattern of our results, the effects of it

would have to be not only considerable, but also long- 358 term because the RRs for most cancers remain significant- 359 ly increased after 5 years. The incidence of metastasis in 360 people with BCC is extremely rare, with reported inci- 361 dences ranging from 0.0028% to 0.5% (16). 362

363 Treatment and mortality bias is likely to be negligible, as 364 almost all NMSCs are treated curatively by excision with- 365 out the use of potentially carcinogenic radiotherapy or 366 systemic chemotherapy (17). Despite the high incidence of 367 NMSC, mortality rates from NMSC are low at 0.91 per 368 100,000 persons per year (18).

#### Comparison with other studies 369

370 A meta-analysis that combined the results of three 371 cohort studies (5) and accounted for individual level 372 risk factors, like smoking, showed an overall summary

**Table 5.** People who were admitted with NMSC and had a subsequent record of another cancer, by time interval between admissions (<1 year, 1–4 years, and 5 or more years): observed numbers, RRs, and 95% CIs

Cancer site (ICD-10 code)	<1 year time interval		1–4 years time interval		5+ years time interval	
	O	RR (95% CI)	O	RR (95% CI)	O	RR (95% CI)
Any malignant primary cancer excluding NMSC <sup>a</sup>	16,485	1.64 (1.61–1.67)	33,304	1.30 (1.29–1.32)	17,359	1.27 (1.25–1.29)
Any malignant primary cancer excluding all skin <sup>b</sup>	14,104	1.41 (1.38–1.43)	31,667	1.25 (1.23–1.26)	16,606	1.22 (1.20–1.24)
Bladder (C67)	1,087	1.08 (1.01–1.16)	2,792	1.14 (1.10–1.19)	1,493	1.14 (1.08–1.20)
Bone (C40–C41)	264	5.37 (4.59–6.27)	211	2.37 (2.03–2.76)	79	1.66 (1.30–2.10)
Brain (C71)	128	0.85 (0.70–1.02)	371	1.05 (0.94–1.17)	282	1.25 (1.11–1.42)
Breast (C50)	1,228	1.31 (1.23–1.39)	3,075	1.20 (1.15–1.24)	1,851	1.29 (1.23–1.35)
Cervix (C53)	38	1.08 (0.76–1.51)	110	1.05 (0.86–1.28)	45	0.75 (0.55–1.01)
Colon (C18–C19)	1,376	1.07 (1.01–1.13)	3,817	1.18 (1.14–1.22)	2,066	1.19 (1.14–1.25)
GI—upper (C00–C06.8, C09–C10, and C12–C14)	713	3.45 (3.15–3.76)	827	2.05 (1.90–2.21)	434	1.98 (1.78–2.19)
Kidney (C64–C65)	366	1.22 (1.08–1.36)	976	1.17 (1.09–1.25)	567	1.18 (1.08–1.29)
Larynx (C32)	161	1.40 (1.17–1.66)	321	1.29 (1.15–1.46)	167	1.31 (1.11–1.54)
Leukemia—lymphoid (C91)	556	2.58 (2.33–2.85)	1,083	2.09 (1.95–2.24)	457	1.53 (1.38–1.69)
Leukemia—myeloid (C92)	234	1.28 (1.11–1.47)	620	1.31 (1.20–1.43)	319	1.24 (1.10–1.39)
Liver (C22)	194	1.04 (0.88–1.21)	565	1.11 (1.02–1.22)	336	1.12 (1.00–1.25)
Lung (C33–C34)	2,166	1.30 (1.24–1.37)	5,723	1.32 (1.29–1.36)	3,053	1.29 (1.24–1.34)
Lymphoma—Hodgkins (C81)	74	1.84 (1.42–2.35)	159	1.71 (1.44–2.02)	65	1.49 (1.14–1.93)
Lymphoma—non-Hodgkin (C82–C85)	878	1.85 (1.71–1.99)	1,842	1.64 (1.56–1.73)	912	1.48 (1.38–1.58)
Melanoma—malignant (C43)	2,912	12.42 (11.69–13.20)	2,553	4.26 (4.06–4.47)	1,228	3.72 (3.49–3.97)
Multiple myeloma (C90)	234	1.03 (0.89–1.18)	659	1.19 (1.09–1.29)	332	1.11 (0.99–1.24)
Nasopharynx (C11)	38	1.51 (1.05–2.12)	39	1.34 (0.93–1.87)	21	1.73 (1.04–2.74)
Nervous system—other (C70)	12	1.85 (0.90–3.51)	35	2.08 (1.39–3.02)	15	1.66 (0.90–2.86)
Esophageal (C15)	464	1.20 (1.08–1.33)	1,186	1.08 (1.01–1.14)	624	1.10 (1.01–1.19)
Ovary (C56)	152	0.98 (0.82–1.16)	474	1.08 (0.98–1.19)	272	1.15 (1.01–1.30)
Pancreas (C25)	348	1.02 (0.91–1.14)	1,027	1.03 (0.96–1.10)	600	1.11 (1.02–1.21)
Prostate (C61)	2,212	1.03 (0.98–1.08)	6,080	1.14 (1.11–1.17)	3,438	1.15 (1.11–1.19)
Rectum (C20–C21)	1,194	2.35 (2.20–2.51)	1,537	1.19 (1.13–1.26)	798	1.20 (1.11–1.29)
Salivary gland (C07–C08)	290	8.74 (7.27–10.52)	443	5.99 (5.26–6.81)	148	3.71 (3.05–4.49)
Stomach (C16)	434	1.08 (0.97–1.20)	1,149	1.06 (1.00–1.13)	622	1.12 (1.03–1.22)
Testis (C62)	22	1.55 (0.96–2.39)	32	1.23 (0.83–1.75)	15	1.10 (0.61–1.82)
Thyroid (C73)	66	1.90 (1.44–2.48)	114	1.19 (0.97–1.45)	46	0.92 (0.67–1.24)
Uterus—body of (C54)	140	0.96 (0.80–1.15)	456	1.11 (1.00–1.22)	234	1.01 (0.88–1.15)

<sup>a</sup>C00–C43, C45–C75, and C81–C97.

<sup>b</sup>C00–C41, C45–C75, and C81–C9.

375 relative risk of cancer after NMSC of 1.49 (95% CI, 1.12–  
376 1.98), similar to our RR of 1.36 (95% CI, 1.35–1.37), not-  
377 withstanding differences in methodology. Our results  
378 also corroborate a particularly high risk of melanoma and  
379 salivary gland cancer, found by others (5, 11).

380 Risks of breast, colorectal, and prostate cancers have  
381 been reported as low in people with NMSC (11, 19, 20). It  
382 has been suggested that increased sunlight exposure and  
383 vitamin D levels play a protective role in their develop-  
384 ment. We did not find low risks for these cancers.

385 Other subgroups known to have high risk of cancer are  
386 transplant patients. However, although SCCs are up to 65-  
387 fold more prevalent in transplant patients than matched  
388 controls (21), the percentage of people with NMSC in our  
389 study who have had a transplant is likely to be very small.

The risk and pattern of cancers in people who have  
undergone transplantation, in whom the excess cancer  
risk particularly affects the kidney, liver, and non-Hodg-  
kin lymphoma (22), would not in itself account for our  
results. Findings of a recent study also showed that, even  
among transplant recipients, SCC was a marker of  
increased risk for other cancers (23).

**Interpretation and implications**

Mechanisms for these associations remain elusive. It is  
plausible that UV-induced oxidative damage resulting in  
gene mutation, immunosuppression, and inflammation  
may also act more systemically to increase the risk of  
cancer in predisposed individuals in other sites, such as  
in immunosuppressed transplant recipients (24, 25) and

those with cancer-predisposing syndromes (26, 27). Recent studies suggest that genetic predisposition to reduced DNA repair capacity may be an underlying susceptibility factor for NMSC and other cancers (28–31). We considered that the occurrence of NMSC in people in our study ages <25 might be associated with certain congenital skin disorders, in particular xeroderma pigmentosum. We, therefore, conducted a *post-hoc* analysis to ascertain the number of people in this age group of the NMSC cohort who also had a record of xeroderma pigmentosum either before or after their record of NMSC. We found a total of 6, 5 of whom had a record of xeroderma pigmentosum before the record of NMSC. In a cohort of 1,621 people with NMSC ages <25, the occurrence of 6 cases of xeroderma pigmentosum is unlikely to be of significant impact.

Our findings should be regarded as supporting the hypothesis of a raised risk of other cancers after diagnosis of NMSC, but not as definitive. The results represent what can be done using very large, linked, routinely collected administrative datasets; but such datasets lack detail. Alternative designs of similar scope, which could incorporate data on genetic profiling and biomarkers, would be substantial undertakings, but the benefits of more precise characterization of those with NMSC who are at risk of other specific malignancies would be considerable.

For those cancers in which screening, or other approaches to cancer prevention, has proven benefit, a next step would be to define guidelines that translate these results into clinical practice and lifestyle advice, especially for younger individuals with NMSC. Guidelines on NMSC do not refer to surveillance for any specific cancer types apart from other skin cancers (32, 33); our results suggest surveillance for other cancers might be warranted if supported by further clinical research and cost-benefit analyses.

Further work to elucidate why people with NMSC, particularly the young, are at increased risk of other

malignancies could be an important step to a more fundamental understanding of carcinogenesis.

#### Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest

No potential conflicts of interest were disclosed.

#### Disclaimer

The views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect those of the funding body.

#### Authors' Contributions

**Conception and design:** E.L.H. Ong, U. Hoang, R. Sinclair, M. Goldacre  
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**Acquisition of data (provided animals, acquired and managed patients, provided facilities, etc.):** M. Goldacre  
**Analysis and interpretation of data (e.g., statistical analysis, biostatistics, computational analysis):** E.L.H. Ong, R. Goldacre, U. Hoang, R. Sinclair, M. Goldacre  
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#### Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for analysis of the record-linkage study data were obtained from the Central and South Bristol Multi-Centre Research Ethics Committee (04/Q2006/176).

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