

The age of the surgeon influences survival after surgery for oesophageal cancer

According to this population-based cohort study from Karolinska Institutet, the best age for a surgeon who operates on oesophageal cancer is between the age of 51 and 56 years. This provides the best chances for the patients' long-term prognosis. The finding is published in the leading journal of surgery, *Annals of Surgery*.

Extensive surgery is the only curative treatment available for most patients diagnosed with esophageal cancer. The operation is not only time-consuming (on average 6 hours) but also technically demanding with a high risk of severe complications. Previous studies have established that a certain number of surgeries of this type must have been performed by a surgeon in order to achieve a stable patient survival. However, while experience often increases with age, physical ability may decrease. Psychological factors such as risk behavior and self-esteem may also change over time.

This study examined 139 surgeons performing 1,761 oesophagectomies and included all patients having undergone oesophagectomy for oesophageal cancer in Sweden in 1987 to 2010 (with follow-up until 2016) with regards to the relation between surgeon age and both short- and long-term mortality.

Both the short- and long-term mortality decreased up until a surgeon age of 52, where the surgeons seemed to plateau and achieved optimal results. But already at 56 years of age there was a turning point and the mortality of the patients increased again. Even after adjusting for confounders, including tumor stage and surgical volume, the age of the surgeon has its own independent prognostic value. However, because this is the first study on the topic, more research is needed to confirm these results.

Publication:

[“Surgeon age in relation to prognosis after esophageal cancer resection”](#)

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