00:04:22 - 00:27:19
Richard Westcott, Science Correspondent, BBC UK

It's small, it's easy to use, it's relatively inexpensive. It looks like a cross between a Brillo pad and a conker. But this tiny invention, according to the latest research, is already saving lives. Called the Cytosponge. You swallow the device, and it helps to find something called Barrett's oesophagus, which is a condition that can potentially develop into cancer.

00:28:23 - 00:55:01
Richard
The idea is simple enough. Once in your stomach, the casing dissolves, leaving this wiry looking sponge behind. After seven and a half minutes, the nurse pulls it back out and it scrapes millions of cells from the lining of your oesophagus or food pipe. The cells are the white bits floating around here, and they're checked for the Barrett's condition, which could be an early sign of cancer.

00:55:08 - 01:24:03
Liz-Trial participant
Hello, I'm Liz, and I'm here because I took part in a medical trial that was designed to look for early stages of cancer. All I had to do was to swallow a pill on a string and have that retrieved in cells that were collected by it within analysed for signs of pre-cancer. But when I was actually diagnosed with oesophageal cancer, it really hit home.

01:24:03 - 01:53:19
Liz
I was devastated and also terribly surprised because I couldn't believe I had a disease that could kill me, and yet feel perfectly healthy. Because my cancer was caught at such an early stage. My treatment was really very straightforward and simple. All that was required were two visits, two half day visits to outpatients where the cancer could be removed by endoscopy, and then a few more visits to remove the remaining pre-cancerous cells.

01:54:17 - 02:04:17
Liz
Swallowing that little pill on a string has made an enormous difference to my life, and I hope it's going to have the same effect on an enormous number of people in the future.

02:05:05 - 02:35:11
Professor Rebecca Fitzgerald, Cancer Prevention at University of Cambridge and Director of the CRUK Cambridge Centre Early Detection Institute

So NHS Scotland were the first region to implement scientist plans during COVID and they've used it for two groups of patients. Patients with Barrett's oesophagus needing monitoring to see whether any cancerous changes are developing to prioritize them. For endoscopy, and also to take patients presenting with new symptoms. And so we've trained the nurses now across all the health boards in Scotland who are widely adopting and implementing this test.

02:36:06 - 02:53:13
Rebecca
And the samples are sent down to the cited laboratories for analysis and the results are got back to the patients within a couple of weeks.