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Bone Cancer Research Trust calls for new treatments for bone cancer

The Bone Cancer Research Trust is calling for new treatments for bone cancers affecting children and young people. This includes osteosarcoma and Ewing's sarcoma, the two most common forms of primary bone cancer.

A study funded by the Bone Cancer Research Trust published in 2009 shows that the survival of children and young adults with bone cancer in the UK has not improved for 20 years.¹ More research is urgently needed to find new treatments. When new treatments are developed, they must be introduced without delay to avoid any more young people dying of this disease. On average a young person cured of this disease would have another 60 years of life.

One new treatment for osteosarcoma that improves survival is currently being considered for funding by NICE. BCRT is asking that this drug be made available as quickly as possible.

Michael Francis, chairman of the BCRT said 'Too many of the children and young people with bone cancer still die from their disease. We need to make bone cancer a priority and we urgently need more research to identify effective new treatments. The Government needs to play its part and streamline the process for introducing new treatments into the UK.'

To support people affected by bone cancer, the Bone Cancer Research Trust is holding an Awareness Week during 20 – 27 June 2009. The theme for the week is the need to improve survival for these young people: this means greater priority, more research and new treatments. The week will finish with the 3rd

Conference for bone cancer patients and their supporters, to be held in St Albans on Saturday 27 June. The conference will cover recent research and will give patients and their families the opportunity to question experts in bone cancer.

Twenty Eight year old Hannah Millington, from Bromsgrove, who has been treated for osteosarcoma says, 'Awareness Week and the Patients' and Supporters' Conference are key events for patients. They are an opportunity to raise awareness about this awful disease and to meet other people who are affected. Bone cancer is quite rare and it is easy for young people with the illness to feel extremely isolated.'

The Awareness Week is supported by, the Teenage Cancer Trust, Sarcoma UK, Cancer 52 and the Rarer Cancers Forum.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Reference

1: Incidence and survival of childhood bone cancer in northern England and the West Midlands, 1981–2002. Eyre et al. British Journal of Cancer. Volume 100, Issue 1. January, 2009

About bone cancer

The two commonest forms of bone cancer are osteosarcoma and Ewing's sarcoma. Both of these cancers most commonly occur between the ages of 10 and 25. Because these cancers can spread to other parts of the body, even when the tumour is detected at a very small size, treatment includes chemotherapy. Chemotherapy is intended to destroy the tumour cells which have spread to the rest of the body and to shrink the main mass of tumour cells. Successful treatment also requires another form of treatment to the main mass of tumour. For osteosarcoma this is usually surgery to remove the main tumour and may involve replacing the affected bone with a metal alternative or amputation. Ewing's sarcoma is similarly often treated with surgery, but treatment also includes radiotherapy which is intended to kill any residual cells. Around 400 patients are diagnosed each year in the UK with primary bone cancers.

About the Bone Cancer Research Trust (BCRT)

The Bone Cancer Research Trust was formed in 2005 as an alliance of a number of established local charities and groups of family and friends of Primary Bone Cancer patients throughout Britain and Ireland. They share a common goal – to promote research into the causes and treatment of Primary Bone Cancer, and in particular of osteosarcoma and Ewing's sarcoma. The Trust has now widened its membership to include Bone Cancer Patients, Medical Practitioners and anyone interested in supporting research into these disabling and life-threatening diseases. This is the second Awareness Week organised by BCRT and the organisation is committed to raising the voice of people with bone cancer and saving lives.

More information about the Patients' and Supporters' Conference is available at the BCRT website (www.bonecancerresearch.org.uk). See Hannah Millington's blog at: <http://www.halashawks.co.uk/hannah/>. Sarcoma UK (www.sarcoma-uk.org), Rarer Cancers Forum (www.rarercancers.org.uk), Cancer 52 (www.cancer52.org.uk) Teenage Cancer Trust (www.teenagecancertrust.org)

A number of spokespeople are available to comment about Bone Cancer Awareness Week and the need for more research and new treatments.

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