



New National Initiative to Improve Care of Pancreatic and Hepatocellular Cancer Patients Across Scotland

Patient and carer voices are being listened to, following years of campaigning to improve the care pathways for those affected by pancreatic and primary liver cancer.

NHS Scotland has launched a new initiative with an innovative “Virtual Cancer Care Team” to speed up diagnosis and treatment for two of the most deadly forms of cancer.

The Scotland-wide two year pilot project, included in the recently published Cancer Action Plan for Scotland, will help patients with suspected pancreatic cancer and people at risk of the most common form of liver cancer – hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC).

Pancreatic Cancer has the lowest five-year survival rate among the 22 most common forms of the disease and HCC has high mortality rates with increasing incidence across Scotland over the past decade.

Scottish campaigner Lynda Murray whose quest for change in memory of her father has been referred to as “Lynda’s asks” in the Scottish Parliament has worked tenaciously for years to bring politicians and clinicians together to improve the care and experiences for patients and families.

Lynda said “Pancreatic and liver cancer is different to other cancers – time is of the essence and everyone deserves a fair chance. This project shows the power behind patient and carer voices who have been pivotal throughout its development and will continue to be involved. People are listening and this is a real opportunity for Scotland to be the pinnacle for collaborative change”.

The new initiative is spearheaded by The Scottish HpB Network (SHPNB) and is funded by the Scottish Government, running until 2024.

Mr Ross Carter, is a recently retired Consultant Surgeon, previously of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Clinical Lead for the pancreatic cancer strand of the project who has been supporting pancreatic cancer patients for many years. Ms Anya Adair is a Consultant Surgeon within NHS Lothian and Clinical Lead for the pilot project which sits within NHS National Services Scotland (NSS), as part of the Scottish Cancer Network.

Ms Adair said: “The management of pancreatic and HCC can be complex and too often patients and their families are not provided with adequate information. This project aims to reduce delays in the care of patients and ensure support is provided”.

A pathway improvement project has been created with a new National Virtual Cancer Care Team at the heart of this innovative approach.

This team will triage patients who have been referred by local health care teams for a suspicion of HCC or pancreatic cancer. The teams then work together to ensure earlier diagnostic and staging investigations take place, then make rapid referrals to regional multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs). This allows clinicians to swiftly begin appropriate treatment, reduces delays in care, and provides better support for patients and their families.

Scottish liver cancer survivor Bill said: “I am fortunate. I am a liver cancer survivor. But I was almost too late. This Pathway will provide patients and their carers with three critical elements. Firstly, speedier referral for those patients with suspicious symptoms for further investigation and diagnosis. Followed by appropriate intervention and treatment. Finally, patients and their carers will receive ongoing support, advice and information through the trauma of dealing with cancer.

I am a cancer survivor. I, my wife and family will be forever thankful to Scotland’s National Health Service. In the future, this Pathway, will allow more patients to say the same.”



Quote from British Liver Trust

Pamela Healy, Chief Executive, British Liver Trust, said: “We welcome this exciting initiative that could significantly improve early diagnosis of liver cancer.

Liver cancer is the fastest growing cause of cancer death in the UK with the majority of people with HCC, the most common form of primary liver cancer, being diagnosed too late for any effective treatment.

“This new pathway has the potential to speed up diagnosis and referrals to ensure that more people can access potentially life-saving treatments.”

About British Liver Trust

The British Liver Trust is the largest UK charity for all adults with liver disease and liver cancer. We tackle the serious and growing public health problem of liver disease and liver cancer. In the UK, liver disease is the third leading cause of premature death and liver cancer is the fastest rising cause of cancer death. We provide up to date information and support and campaign for early detection and improved services and care. Part of the British Liver Trust, Liver Cancer UK is dedicated to saving and improving the lives of people affected by liver cancer by raising awareness, providing support and influencing change.

Visit: www.livercanceruk.org



Quote from Pancreatic Cancer UK

Dawn Crosby, Head of Scotland at Pancreatic Cancer UK, said: “This initiative is hugely welcome and a game-changer for people with the quickest killing cancer.

“Pancreatic cancer is a cancer emergency with 70 per cent of people affected by this devastating disease not receiving any form of treatment. Tragically, for most people this means it is too late to save them. More than half die within three months of their diagnosis.

“Focusing on offering faster diagnosis, and access to treatment and support from a specialist cancer nurse will be absolutely vital in giving patients across Scotland the very best chance of survival and quality of life.”

About Pancreatic Cancer UK

Pancreatic Cancer UK is taking on pancreatic cancer through research, support and campaigning to transform the future for people affected.

- We provide expert, personalised support and information via our Support Line (Freephone 0808 801 0707) and through a range of publications.
- We fund innovative research to find the breakthroughs that will change how we understand, diagnose and treat pancreatic cancer.
- We campaign for change; for better care, treatment and research, and for pancreatic cancer to have the recognition it needs.



Quote from Pancreatic Cancer Action

Fiona Brown, Scottish Development Manager at Pancreatic Cancer Action said “At last, an initiative focused on the support needs of people affected by pancreatic cancer. Patients and carers are considered throughout the development of this project.

We warmly welcome the investment in additional resource of the Cancer Care Team, to help improve experiences and outcomes.

Special thanks to everyone involved with this innovative project and in particular, Scottish campaigner Lynda Murray, whose tenacious engagement with politicians and clinicians over a number of years has been pivotal in strengthening collaborative support for change.

Swifter referral pathways and helping people access support for early holistic care will make a big difference for patients & carers”.

About Pancreatic Cancer Action

Pancreatic Cancer Action is a UK-wide charity that focuses on symptom awareness, early diagnosis and improving the quality of life for those affected by pancreatic cancer.

We do this by:

- Raising public awareness and knowledge of pancreatic cancer and its symptoms to achieve early diagnosis
- Campaigning and lobbying the government and key stakeholders for change to advance the standard of healthcare for individuals
- Providing free pioneering educational resources and accredited eLearning training modules for our medical and healthcare communities to diagnose pancreatic cancer sooner
- Funding innovative research to improve early diagnosis, develop effective treatments and to improve pancreatic cancer outcomes
- Providing free, easy to understand and certified patient information and offering practical, emotional support to all affected by pancreatic cancer.

For further information or enquiries in relation to this release, please contact nss.hpb@nhs.scot
