



## Ten minute talk boosts breast cancer awareness six fold

A ten minute talk between a woman and a health professional increases the chances she will be 'breast cancer aware' by six fold, according to research published online in the British Journal of Cancer (BJC) and presented at the NCRI Cancer Conference in Birmingham yesterday (Wednesday).

The results of the Cancer Research UK trial showed that even one year after the talk women were six times more likely to have the knowledge they need to recognise the early signs of breast cancer.

This is the first time researchers have proved that one-to-one communication can make a real and important difference to a woman's awareness of breast cancer in the long-term.

Professor Amanda Ramirez, director of the Cancer Research UK Promoting Early Presentation Group at King's College London, who led the trial, said: "We are very excited by these results.

"If we are able to encourage women to go to their doctor as soon as they spot any symptoms that could be breast cancer using this approach, then we have the real potential to save lives.

"Breast cancer awareness among women in the UK is low in general, but particularly so in women over the age of 65. This may explain why older women are more likely to delay seeing their doctor about breast cancer symptoms and have poorer survival as a result.

"Our next step is to test whether this raised awareness translates into earlier diagnosis."

The trial involved 867 women aged 67 to 70 as they went for their final mammogram as part of the national breast cancer screening programme.

Each woman had a personal ten minute talk with a trained radiographer working in the programme. They talked the participants through a booklet on breast cancer, showed them photographs of breast cancer symptoms and took them through how to check for changes using a silicone breast.

Women were sent a breast cancer awareness questionnaire a year later. They were said to be 'breast cancer aware' if they could identify at least five symptoms other than a lump, knew that 70-year-old women were more at risk than younger women and said that they checked their breasts at least once a month.

The researchers also reviewed all of the studies to date on raising cancer awareness and promoting earlier presentation, which is published in the BJC and presented at the NCRI conference alongside the trial results.

Dr Lindsay Forbes, who led the review, said: "We found studies examining a number of ways to raise cancer awareness, ranging from leaflets to public information campaigns, but few have been evaluated properly. Those that have, show much more modest effects

on cancer awareness than have been achieved in our trial. In fact, we're the first group to confidently show that you can make a long-term, large difference to people's awareness of breast cancer."

The studies are part of the National Awareness and Early Diagnosis Initiative (NAEDI) supplement that will be published in the BJC later this year, which will for the first time bring together the research underpinning the initiative.

Dr Jane Cope, director of the NCRI, said: "Helping people to recognise cancer symptoms is an important early step towards saving lives, and this study provides convincing evidence that in just 10 minutes of conversation with a trusted professional, it is possible to have a lasting effect on a woman's understanding of breast health."

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**For media enquiries please contact Rachel Gonzaga in the NCRI press office on 07769 641 423, or the London press office on 020 7061 8300 or, out-of-hours, the duty press officer on 07050 264 059**

Read the abstract of this talk on the NCRI Cancer Conference website: [http://www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference/programme/speakerAbstracts/2009Para\\_Lindsay\\_Forbes.asp](http://www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference/programme/speakerAbstracts/2009Para_Lindsay_Forbes.asp)

**A randomised controlled trial of an intervention to promote early presentation of breast cancer in older women: effect on breast cancer awareness. Linsell et al. British Journal of Cancer. Wednesday 7 October.**

**Interventions to Increase Cancer Awareness and Promote Early Presentation: Systematic Review. Austoker et al. British Journal of Cancer. Wednesday 7 October.**

**This work contributes to one of the national workstreams of NAEDI, which is co chaired by the Department of Health and Cancer Research UK. NAEDI is one of the priorities set out within the government's Cancer Reform Strategy.**

### About Cancer Research UK

- Together with its partners and supporters, Cancer Research UK's vision is to beat cancer.
- Cancer Research UK carries out world-class research to improve understanding of the disease and find out how to prevent, diagnose and treat different kinds of cancer.
- Cancer Research UK ensures that its findings are used to improve the lives of all cancer patients.
- Cancer Research UK helps people to understand cancer, the

[www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference](http://www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference)

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progress that is being made and the choices each person can make.

- Cancer Research UK works in partnership with others to achieve the greatest impact in the global fight against cancer.
- For further information about Cancer Research UK's work or to find out how to support the charity, please call 020 7009 8820 or visit [www.cancerresearchuk.org.uk](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org.uk).

#### About the NCRI Cancer Conference

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Conference is the UK's major forum for showcasing the best British and international cancer research. The Conference offers unique opportunities for networking and sharing knowledge by bringing together world leading experts from all cancer research disciplines. The fifth annual NCRI Cancer Conference is taking place from the 4-7 October 2009 at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham.

For more information visit [www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference](http://www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference)

#### About the NCRI

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) was established in April 2001. It is a UK-wide partnership between the government,

charity and industry which promotes co-operation in cancer research among the 21 **member organisations** for the benefit of **patients**, the public and the scientific community.

For more information visit [www.ncri.org.uk](http://www.ncri.org.uk)

NCRI members are: the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI); Association for International Cancer Research; Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council; Breakthrough Breast Cancer; Breast Cancer Campaign; Cancer Research UK; CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA, Department of Health; Economic and Social Research Council; Leukaemia Research; Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research; Macmillan Cancer Support; Marie Curie Cancer Care; Medical Research Council; Northern Ireland Health and Social Care (Research & Development Office); Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation; Scottish Government Health Directorates (Chief Scientist Office); Tenovus; Welsh Assembly Government (Wales Office of Research and Development for Health & Social Care); The Wellcome Trust; and Yorkshire Cancer Research.

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