



Knowledge boosts pain killing drugs

Giving cancer patients information on how to deal with their pain and manage their medicine can result in a 20 per cent improvement in pain control, according to research presented at the NCRI Cancer Conference in Birmingham today (Wednesday).

Explaining how pain-killers worked and debunking any fears people had about the drugs reduced the pain cancer patients felt by an additional one point on a scale of one to ten, where average pain scores are about five out of ten.

All patients were being treated with strong pain-killers but those given the additional information experienced significantly better pain control.

The researchers are calling for educational programmes on managing cancer pain and strong pain-killers to be given routinely alongside treatment drugs for cancer.

Lead researcher Professor Michael Bennett, based at Lancaster University, said: "This is good news for cancer patients.

"Helping people manage pain is a major challenge for doctors and our research shows for the first time that education is an effective, easy and cheap way to do this.

"It's astonishing that simply taking the time to explain to people about their pain and medicines can result in better pain control than just relying on strong pain-killers alone. It shows just how complex an issue pain is and that sometimes it really pays to address patients' concerns to improve their quality of life.

"Some of our related research also suggests that this type of approach is especially relevant for older patients.

"We think this type of intervention should be used by doctors and other health professionals on a regular basis – it's an effective method that's sadly underused in the clinic."

Around 40 per cent of people with cancer experience pain by the time they are diagnosed. This rises to 70 per cent for people with more advanced disease.

The researchers looked at the level of pain felt by someone from having cancer reported on a scale from one to ten. They reviewed 21 studies on the topic and for the first time were able to demonstrate a clear benefit on pain control for this type of approach.

The information given to patients included encouraging patients to tell doctors and nurses about their pain, reducing misconceptions about risk of addiction and side-effects, and advice on how and when to take their pain-killers.

Professor Mike Richards, national cancer director and professor of palliative medicine, said: "Even with strong pain killers, some cancer patients continue to experience pain. This study is very important as it highlights

the added benefits of providing good information and communicating effectively with patients."

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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 the out-of-hours duty press officer on 07050 264059

Listen to an interview with Professor Michael Bennett here: <http://tinyurl.com/Bennett-NCRI>

Read the abstract of this talk on the NCRI Cancer Conference website: http://www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference/programme/speakerAbstracts/2009Para_Mike_Bennett.asp

About Lancaster University

Lancaster is one of only 29 UK universities ranked in the top 200 universities worldwide, coming in at number 170 in the annual THE-QS world university rankings and is currently ranked top University in the North West in the Independent, Guardian, Times and Sunday Times league tables. Lancaster University is the top ranked university in the North and in the top ten of comparable universities according to the 2009 National Student Survey.

Lancaster University's mission to excel in research at the highest international level has been given a boost with the results of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise revealing that 92% of its research is recognised as world leading or internationally significant and some key areas of research are ranked top in the UK including 1st in UK for Physics, in the UK's top 3 for Bio-medicine part of the newly established School of Health and Medicine and in the UK's top 3 for Art and Design (which at Lancaster includes Music, Theatre, Film and New Media in the Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts)

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

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

www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference

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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

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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