



NEW GUIDE CAN PREDICT PATIENTS' SURVIVAL

A NEW way of predicting how long terminally ill cancer patients have to live, has been devised by Cancer Research UK-funded research.

The new guide*, being presented today (Tuesday) at the National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Conference in Liverpool is based on blood tests, white cell blood count, pulse rate and patient symptoms and can predict survival at least as well as a doctor.

Scientists said that the model differed from previous scales in that it could help to give a more accurate picture of whether patients might have only two weeks or two months left to live, independently of a doctor's estimate.

The scale could help families, carers and nurses make plans with cancer patients who are close to the end of their life.

The study, funded by Cancer Research UK, looked at 18 palliative care services including hospices, hospital support teams and community service and more than 1000 patients with advanced cancer who were no longer receiving treatment.

A combination of markers like blood tests, pulse rate, weight loss, tiredness, breathlessness and white blood cell count were used to produce two versions of the scale.

Dr Paddy Stone, lead study author based at St George's University of London, said; "These scales can provide valuable information for patients, carers and health professionals. It is important to remember that these results do not provide a definitive model for predicting how long someone will live, but it will give everyone concerned a clearer idea of what it is likely to happen.

"This study provides a solid starting point for improving accuracy in survival predictions which can continue to be refined and improved."

Professor Chris Todd, another author based at the University of Manchester, said: "An instrument like this will also help us identify which patients could take part in studies aimed at improving the quality of life for people receiving end of life care. We are already looking at how to improve the prediction models and how to make them readily available to clinicians through, for example, iPhones and other mobile devices."

Scientists claim that one form of the scale, which does not require a blood test, provides a prediction of survival as good as a doctor's estimate; while another version using a blood test is better than a clinician's prognosis.

The model could also be adapted to a patient who may not be able to respond to questions about their health.

Dr Lesley Walker, director of cancer information at Cancer Research UK, said: "It can be very difficult for the families and friends of cancer patients - who are no longer being treated - to deal with the final stages of their lives. Being told you are terminally ill brings a great amount of uncertainty; any information which can help carers and families cope with this and help plan palliative treatment is extremely useful.

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For media enquiries please contact the NCRI press office on 020 3469 8300 or, out-of-hours, the duty press officer on 07050 264 059

Notes to Editors:

*Gwilliam B et al., The prognosis in palliative care study (PiPS) (<http://www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference/2010abstracts/abstracts/PP35.htm>)

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 seventh annual NCRI Cancer Conference is taking place from the 6-9 November 2011 at the BT Convention Centre in Liverpool. 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 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 (England); Economic and Social Research Council; Leukaemia and Lymphoma 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.

About Cancer Research UK

- Cancer Research UK is the world's leading cancer charity dedicated to saving lives through research
- The charity's groundbreaking work into the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer has helped save millions of lives. This work is funded entirely by the public.

www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference

NCRI Cancer Conference Press Office

Angel Building, 407 St John Street, London EC1V 4AD

t: +44 (0)20 3469 8300 | +44 (0)7050 264 059 (out of hours) e: press@ncri.org.uk



- Cancer Research UK has been at the heart of the progress that has already seen survival rates double in the last forty years.
- Cancer Research UK supports research into all aspects of cancer through the work of over 4,000 scientists, doctors and nurses.
- Together with its partners and supporters, Cancer Research UK's vision is to beat cancer.

For further information about Cancer Research UK's work or to find out how to support the charity, please call **020 7121 6699** or visit www.cancerresearchuk.org