71 year old pancreatic cancer survivor runs marathon!

Thursday 14 May, 2015

Norman Whitwood, a 71 year old rare pancreatic cancer survivor, set himself the challenge of running the Milton Keynes marathon on the 4th May to raise vital funds for the charity Pancreatic Cancer Action.

Norman, who was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in August 2012, was one of the lucky few to be diagnosed in time for life-saving surgery, which is currently the only cure for pancreatic cancer.

Early diagnosis in time for surgery is essential for survival and surgery (Whipples procedure) is currently the only cure. 82% of people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in the UK die within a year.

"I was lucky. Because I was fit I knew immediately that something unusual was wrong so I got myself checked and diagnosed relatively quickly," says Norman. "Also my tumour was not too developed and operable. Plus, because I was fit I stood the chemo well and my recovery has been progressive and bearable – apart from pounding out the miles in training for the marathon."

Training for the marathon was not without its glitches, after successfully following his training plan and completing a 20 mile run, Norman suffered an internal bleed. This is not unusual after having a Whipples procedure, but it meant that Norman couldn't run 200 yards, let alone the miles he needed to do in training. Shortly before the marathon he was getting back in to his training and ready to take on the challenge!

Norman completed the marathon, running alongside another member of his running club, Harpenden Arrows based at St George's school sports centre: "I had great support from the crowds as well as friends from Harpenden Arrows and my family. It's a tough course, it's supposed to be flat around Milton Keynes, but it's not!"

Norman raised well over £2200 for Pancreatic Cancer Action, a charity committed to working towards earlier diagnosis with the focus on educating the public and medical community as well as funding research. They also campaign for more funding from the government in to research, which currently stands at less than one per cent of all cancer research funding.

Ali Stunt, Founder of Pancreatic Cancer Action and a rare survivor of the illness, said: "We are delighted that Norman took part in the Milton Keynes Marathon and raised an amazing amount of money for Pancreatic Cancer Action. How inspirational that he is a pancreatic cancer survivor too!"

"As a charity we rely on our enthusiastic fundraisers and the generosity of the public to help us continue our vital work," Ali continues.

To support Pancreatic Cancer Action a charity campaigning for the early diagnosis of this dreadful disease.

About Pancreatic Cancer Action

Pancreatic Cancer Action is a charity based in the UK whose mission is to change pancreatic cancer survival number and focus on improving early detection statistics. The charity"s approach is to raise awareness of pancreatic cancer to the public, the medical community and Government, provide education and training on pancreatic cancer to medical professionals and fund research specifically into improving early diagnosis of pancreatic cancer.

Founded by Ali Stunt, who is herself a rare survivor of the disease. Pancreatic Cancer Action has the support of many leading clinicians and researchers in the pancreatic cancer arena along with others whose lives have been touched by pancreatic cancer in some way.

Further information about pancreatic cancer

Pancreatic cancer is currently very difficult to diagnose. Upon diagnosis, most sufferers find they have untreatable terminal cancer with an average life expectancy of between three to six months. Surgery is currently the only cure for pancreatic cancer, but only 10% are diagnosed in time for this to be an option.

Classic symptoms for pancreatic cancer include painless jaundice, significant weight loss, new onset diabetes not associated with weight gain and new onset of persistent or significant abdominal pain and/or

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back pain.

In 2012, 8,888 people were diagnosed with pancreatic cancer1

In 2011, 8,662 people died from pancreatic cancer in the UK ((Welsh Cancer Intelligence and Surveillance Unit; ISD Scotland Cancer Mortality in Scotland (2012);Northern Ireland Cancer Registry Cancer Statistics, Pancreas http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/nicr/CancerData/OnlineStatistics/Pancreas/;Deaths registered in England and Wales in 2012 by cause))

Five-year survival is only four per cent. This figure has not improved significantly in over forty years

Relative survival to one year is less than 20% and the UK has one of the worst rates in Europe

24 people a day die from pancreatic cancer3

Pancreatic cancer is the fifth leading cause of cancer death in the UK4

Pancreatic cancer receives only one per cent of overall research funding5

Only 10% of patients are eligible for potentially curative surgery due to late diagnosis

Patients able to have surgery to remove the tumour have up to a 30 per cent chance of surviving five years6

Nearly half of people are diagnosed as an emergency in our A&E system7

The average life expectancy on diagnosis is four to six months8

It is the UK"s ninth most common cancer9

These figures are the latest available statistics on pancreatic cancer (at the time of publication). Because the reporting system for incidence varies with the cancer registries across the countries of the United Kingdom and for mortality published by the ONS, there is usually a delay of approximately 18 months for the collation of incidence and of 12 months for the collation of mortality figures. This is why we, in 2014, are citing figures from 2011.

1.ONS Cancer Statistics Registrations EnglandReleased June 2014 ?

2.CRUK The 20 Most Common Causes of Cancer Death: 2010http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/mortality/cancerdeaths/?

3.Total UK 2012 mortality divided by 365 days ?

4.CRUK The 20 Most Common Causes of Cancer Death: 2010 http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/mortality/cancerdeaths/ ?

5.NCRI CRD Data Package 2011 – available to download online http://www.ncri.org.uk/what-we-do/research-database ?

6.Ghaneh et al., (2008) Neoadjuvant and adjuvant strategies for pancreatic cancer EJSO 34 297-305 ?

7.NCIN (2014) Routes to Diagnosis 2008-2010, England http://ncin.org.uk/publications/routes_to_diagnosis ?

8.Spalding and Williamson (2007) Pancreatic Cancer, Medicine Vol 35, pp 325-329 ?

CRUK the 20 most common cancers in the UK 2009 data are available to download onlinehttp://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/incidence/commoncancers/uk-cancer-incidence-statistics-for-common-cancers

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