

PMP Awareness Month brings attention to rare cancer

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Changes in bowel habit, loss of appetite and abdominal swelling are all symptoms of many common illnesses but they are also key symptoms of pseudomyxoma peritonei, a rare abdominal cancer which usually starts in the appendix.

Pseudomyxoma peritonei, or PMP as it is often known, and other appendix cancers are so rare that many general practitioners will never see a case during their career. Treatment is specialised and complex - in England, there are just two centres approved to treat the disease, the Basingstoke and North Hampshire hospital and the Christie, Manchester.

Pseudomyxoma peritonei (pronounced sue-doh-mix-oh-muh pary-ih-ton-nee-i) is thought to affect just 1 or 2 people per million each year.

During August, Pseudomyxoma Survivor will be promoting awareness of the disease with events including pub crawls and head-shaving. There will also be an announcement towards the end of the month of the Fundraiser of the Year, celebrating the achievements of the charities supporters.

For more information on pseudomyxoma peritonei, please visit <http://www.pseudomyxomasurvivor.org>

To join the "PMP FUnraising" Facebook page, visit <http://www.facebook.com/pseudomyxomasurvivor>

Pseudomyxoma peritonei is a rare cancer that usually starts as a small growth (adenoma) in the appendix comparable to a polyp. This adenoma will eventually break through the appendix wall and into the peritoneum (abdominal cavity lining). The tumors secrete a jelly-like mucus in the abdomen, which causes the abdomen to swell and compress other vital organs.

If left untreated, this mucin will engulf the abdominal cavity producing a characteristic "jelly belly". It is this build up of mucin that generally causes symptoms.

PMP is not like other types of cancer in that it is seldom spread through the blood stream or lymphatic system, it generally remains contained within the abdomen and spreads along inner surfaces. Presently, it is thought to affect between one and two million people worldwide per year.

PMP symptoms usually appear after some time and are caused by the build up of resulting mucus within the abdomen. Some sufferers do not show any symptoms for some years.

Symptoms are often initially misdiagnosed as a hernia or ovarian cancer and include but are not limited to:

- Changes in bowel habit
- Loss of appetite
- Pelvic pain or pain within the abdominal area
- Appendicitis
- Swelling of the abdomen
- Weight gain and or increase in waist size
- Bladder discomfort

These symptoms can be caused by a variety of medical conditions which are not necessarily PMP. However, due to the nature of this cancer it is imperative to rule out PMP as a cause. Any unexplained symptoms should always be discussed with your doctor.

Pseudomyxoma Survivor is a charity established primarily to provide emotional and practical support to those affected by the disease but also to raise awareness and to raise funding to support research.

Pseudomyxoma Survivor is completely dependent on voluntary donations. It is too small to have offices or staff; the charity is run entirely by volunteers.

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