



MEDIA ALERT - MOUTH CANCER DRUG MAY SOON BE AVAILABLE ON NHS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Interviews Available: Founder of the Mouth Cancer Foundation Dr Vinod Joshi

To set up an interview please call Media Ambitions on 020 7482 3600.

Today, the Mouth Cancer Foundation came a step closer to making sure all Mouth Cancer patients have access to a new drug, currently not widely available on the NHS. The drug in question is called 'Cetuximab' and is a new cancer treatment available in Scotland since July 2006, but not England and Wales at present.

It is hoped that cetuximab in combination with radiotherapy can be used as an alternative in Mouth cancer patients for whom chemoradiotherapy is in appropriate.

The charity successfully convinced the Appeal Panel of the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) to ask its Appraisal Committee's to reconsider its appraisal decision to ban the drug for head and neck cancer patients in England and Wales. The appraisal has now been returned to the Committee.

The Founder of the Mouth Cancer Foundation, Dr Vinod K Joshi, explained that the charity represented the views of its members constituting a wide population of patients with mouth cancer.

Four members of the Mouth Cancer Foundation, Mrs Brenda Brady, Mr John Spencer, Mrs Christine Piff and Mr Mike Cummins provided the Appeal Panel with personal accounts of the suffering caused by head and neck cancer and of the very unpleasant nature of their treatments. They stressed that it was important for the Institute to take patients' views into account.

This the Appeal Panel did, and the debate centred on the efficacy of cetuximab. Currently both carboplatin and cisplatin are used for chemoradiotherapy in the United Kingdom with horrific side effects. Carboplatin had fewer adverse effects than cisplatin, but was more likely to suppress the bone-marrow. Therefore, cisplatin was the preferred treatment. The

Appraisal Committee accepted that cetuximab plus radiotherapy caused less severe adverse effects than either of the platinum-based chemoradiotherapy regimens.

The Appeal Panel considered that the Appraisal Committee had not given appropriate consideration to the issue of whether a chemoradiotherapy regimen of carboplatin alone was as effective as cisplatin, or that a regimen consisting of carboplatin plus fluorouracil would necessarily be suitable for the population identified in the decision problem in whom cisplatin was contra-indicated. The Panel found that, as a result, the Committee's conclusions were perverse in proposing a 'carboplatin-based' regimen for those in whom cisplatin was contra-indicated.

The Founder of the Mouth Cancer Foundation, Dr Vinod Joshi says "The Mouth Cancer Foundation is delighted that the decision has been referred back the Final Appraisal Determination to the Committee for reconsideration".

-ENDS-

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Mouth Cancer Foundation is a registered charity no. 1109298.

Cancer can occur in any part of the mouth, tongue, lips, throat, salivary glands, pharynx, larynx, sinus, and other sites located in the head and neck area. In its very early stages, Mouth Cancer can be almost invisible making it easy to ignore.

Symptoms include:

1. A sore or ulcer in the mouth that does not heal within 3 weeks
2. A lump or overgrowth of tissue anywhere in the mouth
3. A white or red patch on the gums, tongue, or lining of the mouth
4. Difficulty in swallowing, chewing or moving the jaw or tongue
5. Numbness of the tongue or other area of the mouth
6. A feeling that something is caught in the throat
7. A chronic sore throat or hoarseness that persists more than 6 weeks
8. Swelling of the jaw that causes dentures to fit poorly or become uncomfortable
9. Neck swelling present for more than 3 weeks
10. Unexplained tooth mobility persisting for more than 3 weeks

Mouth Cancer Awareness Week runs from Sunday 11th November to Saturday 17th November 2007.

More information about Mouth Cancer is available at the Mouth Cancer Foundation web site www.mouthcancerfoundation.org or by emailing info@mouthcancerfoundation.org