

MEDIA RELEASE

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Bristol based widow raises over £1,300 for Mouth Cancer Awareness

Paul Beament did not smoke or drink so when he was diagnosed with mouth cancer, in February 2004, it was a complete shock to both him and his wife, Kezia.

Paul was 33, a keen sportsman and in general good health. He'd had some pain at the back of his mouth for a couple of weeks and in January he saw his dentist, imagining it to be a mouth ulcer or a wisdom tooth. He was told it was a large mouth ulcer on the back of his tongue and an appointment would be made at the local dental hospital with a specialist to obtain antibiotics.

After not hearing anything for a fortnight, and the pain becoming worse Kezia drove him on the morning of Saturday 31 January to the local NHS Walk-in Centre to get a second opinion. After visiting there, and then a minor injury unit at the local hospital, they ended up visiting the on-call emergency dentist.

Alarm bells rang and the on-call dentist called out a specialist who confirmed his fears. That afternoon **mouth cancer** entered Paul and Kezia's lives.

Within 3 weeks Paul underwent a 12-hour operation to remove half of his tongue and reconstruct it with soft tissue taken from his forearm. He had a peg feeding tube fitted to provide nutrition directly into his stomach and a tracheotomy to help him breathe. As he was such a young, fit and determined patient, he didn't use them other than 4 days immediately post-op. He was determined to fight the cancer and get back to his job as a Senior IT Consultant.

After recovering from the surgery, a 6-week course of radiotherapy followed, after which Paul and Kezia were told he was cancer free. Mid-June saw them mark their second wedding anniversary and Paul was hoping to return to work. However, by July the cancer was back but further surgery was impossible, so they faced months of chemotherapy.

Paul passed away in December 2004. He was 34. His widow, Kezia, is now doing all she can to promote awareness of mouth cancer. She started by handing out memorial cards listing the symptoms of mouth cancer to 150 mourners at Paul's funeral, and giving everyone a pale blue Mouth Cancer Awareness ribbon to wear. Ribbons were kindly donated by the British Dental Health Foundation. She also requested that money should be donated to 2 cancer charities, rather than be spent on funeral flowers. Over £1,300 was raised for the Mouth Cancer Foundation, which aims to increase mouth

cancer awareness and provide support to those suffering from mouth, throat and other head and neck cancers. It has a comprehensive website www.mouthcancerfoundation.org as well as a unique, online support group.

Kezia says: “I want to help raise the awareness of mouth cancer. I want people to know the signs and if they have any symptoms to go and see their dentist. I think that everyone is aware of the risks of skin cancer these days and they know to keep an eye on moles and get them checked out if they alter. I want everyone to be just as aware of mouth cancer, so that they get to know the inside of their mouth and know what to do if they notice any changes. From our experience it is also clear that the profile needs to be raised among the medical and dental world as well. We saw 4 professionals before mouth cancer was suspected!”

Kezia continues: “Paul was one of life’s genuine good guys. He was admired, respected and loved by many. Raising money for and helping the Mouth Cancer Foundation in Paul’s memory is one way I can ensure that Paul is never forgotten. I’ve started pestering friends and family for their fundraising ideas, and there are a few activities being planned. I hope to do a car boot sale when the weather is a bit warmer, and my work colleagues have chosen the Mouth Cancer Foundation as our Charity of the Year for 2004/5 so we’ll be raising money for them throughout the year.”

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

Kezia Beament can be contacted at kezia@mouthcancerfoundation.org

Paul Beament was born and raised in Devon where he was a keen sportsman from an early age and was captain of Sidmouth Cricket Club 2nd XI in the mid 90's. He moved to Bristol in 1998 to work as an IT Consultant, where he met Kezia and they married in 2002.

Mouth cancers have a higher proportion of deaths per number of cases than breast cancer, cervical cancer or skin melanoma. In the UK, there has been a 19% increase in cases from 3,673 in 1995 to 4,400 in 2001 and 13,000 people in the UK are currently living in the shadow of this debilitating disease. An increasing number of young people are being affected and 25% of the cases have no associated significant risk factors. The mortality rate from mouth cancer is just over 50% due to late detection. Despite treatment, there were 1,592 deaths in 2003 – that's approximately one death every 5 hours. The chances of survival are much improved if the cancer is detected early and rapidly treated.

More information about mouth cancers are available at the:

Mouth Cancer Foundation

www.mouthcancerfoundation.org

Mouth Cancer Awareness Campaign Ribbons are available from:

British Dental Health Foundation

Smile House

2 East Union Street

Rugby CV22 6AJ

Tel: 0870 770 4015

Email: sales@dentalhealth.org.uk Web: www.dentalhealth.org.uk