



MEDIA RELEASE

MR008: 17 October 2005 [for immediate release]

7 year-old girl with mouth cancer launches appeal for Mouth Cancer Awareness Week

Seven year-old Warwickshire girl Georgia Cooper is in remission from a rare form of mouth cancer. Now the Mouth Cancer Foundation is helping her launch the Georgia Cooper Mouth Cancer Appeal (GCMCA) in time for Mouth Cancer Awareness Week (13-19 November 2005).

Georgia was diagnosed with mouth cancer in April after discovering a lump on her gum. She was operated on at the Birmingham Children's Hospital in May, when a surgeon removed a large part of her upper jaw and palate. She now wears a denture and has weekly check-ups and speech therapy.

Georgia now has five years to wait before her specialist Mr Sat Parmar, Maxillofacial Surgeon at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, will give the all-clear. She will also have to undergo reconstructive surgery when she

reaches adulthood. In the meantime, she plans to do all she can to raise awareness of mouth cancer so that other children like her can be diagnosed early. That's why the Mouth Cancer Foundation (MCF) will be providing Georgia with a free mini website, posters, t-shirts, wristbands and a banner to boost start her campaign.

Dr Vinod Joshi, founder of the MCF said, "We're all really touched by Georgia's courage and want to help her spread this year's Mouth Cancer Awareness Week message: 'It could be you!'. Schools should also raise awareness among children because awareness is not only the key to early detection but also to the avoidance of risk factors like smoking and drinking. 25% of mouth cancer cases are not associated with any known risk factor, hence the need for vigilance. If you notice a lump in your mouth that wasn't there before or a mouth ulcer which lasts for more than 3 weeks, you should see a dentist or doctor immediately."

Georgia said, "I am very excited about launching the GCMCA. I want to raise some money for the Mouth Cancer Foundation. We should all have regular check-ups."

Mum, Julie said, "We really want to tell parents to check their children's mouths and have regular dental check-ups. We'll do all we can to raise awareness and point out that mouth cancer doesn't always occur in older people."

The MCF has already helped launch two other appeals, the Barry Peers Mouth Cancer Appeal (BPMCA) in Liverpool and the Paul Beament Mouth Cancer Appeal (PBMCA) in Bristol led by widows Carol Peers and Kezia Beament, both in memory of their late husbands who both passed away with mouth cancer. Over the past year, these two appeals together with many other supporting fundraisers have raised awareness through local events such as pub quiz nights, car boot sales, golf tournaments and cricket matches as well as cross country running and bike rides. Many of the 860 members of the MCF's Online Support Group will be spreading the word of Mouth Cancer Awareness Week and organizing their own activities to attract the local media.

The Mouth Cancer Foundation is sending out over 40,000 free posters to both dental and doctor surgeries across the country to pin up in waiting rooms in time for the Week. The posters are being distributed with the help of the World Cancer Research Fund and two dental suppliers, Dental Directory and Henry Schein. The poster is eye-catching, explains the facts about mouth cancer, how to reduce the risks, and lists the top 10 symptoms to look out for. The free poster is also available to the public by contacting the MCF through its award-winning website www.mouthcancerfoundation.org

The MCF also provides t-shirts and trendy wristbands in exchange for donations. More information can be found on the website which receives around 26,000 unique visitors a month.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

To arrange an interview with Georgia Cooper, Julie Cooper, Sat Parmar or the Mouth Cancer Foundation, email info@mouthcancerfoundation.org or call the MCF media hotline on 020 8658 3504.

For the symptoms of mouth cancer, further information and the online support group visit the Mouth Cancer Foundation website www.mouthcancerfoundation.org

The main object of the Mouth Cancer Foundation is the relief of sickness and the promotion and protection of good health among those suffering or at risk of Mouth, Throat and other Head & Neck Cancer by the collation and dissemination of relevant information among the public generally and by the provision of support to patients, carers and health professionals.

This year's Mouth Cancer Awareness Week (13-19 November 2005) is using the tagline 'It Could Be You'. The Week is coordinated by the British Dental Health Foundation (BDHF), supported by the Mouth Cancer Foundation (MCF), Denplan, Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), British Dental Association (BDA), British Association of Head and Neck Oncologists (BAHNO), British Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (BAOMS), Cancer Research UK, the health departments of the four UK countries, GKT, Pharmacy Health Link, QUIT and The Scope Group.

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 17% increase in cases over the last four years to 4,400 in 2001. 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 and quality of life are much improved if the cancer is detected early and rapidly treated. Only 6% of people demonstrate unprompted awareness of mouth cancer. While there is an increased risk for people who are both smokers and heavy drinkers, it is important to encourage people to check their own mouth on a regular basis.