



**MEDIA ALERT - LEADING UK MOUTH CANCER CHARITY CALLS FOR
GREATER AWARENESS IN DIAGNOSIS OF MOUTH CANCER**

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Interviews available with Dr Vinod Joshi, founder of the Mouth Cancer Foundation

To set up an interview please call Media Ambitions on 020 8940 2222.

A new European wide survey*, out today at the International Conference on Innovative Approaches in Head & Neck Oncology (ICHNO), reveals the UK lags behind Europe in the awareness of one of the world's most common cancers. As a result the **Mouth Cancer Foundation** is calling for more to be done when it comes to improving the symptom awareness and diagnosis of mouth cancer.

The 'About Face' survey investigating public awareness of head and neck cancer, commissioned by Merck Serono and the European Head and Neck Cancer Society (EHNS), uncovered worryingly low awareness of symptoms and risk factors for head and neck cancer, according to the UK's leading mouth cancer charity the **Mouth Cancer Foundation**. The results revealed that despite there being more than 7,800 new cases each year² and 2,496 deaths per year in the UK³ - resulting from two main forms of the disease - 89% of UK survey respondents were not aware of the term 'head and neck cancer'.¹

Founder of the **Mouth Cancer Foundation**, Dr Vinod Joshi says "*We are not surprised that in the U.K. only one in ten has heard of the term 'head and neck' cancer as we have used the term 'mouth cancer'** in our public awareness campaigns. Reassuringly, a U.K. survey in 2007 showed that only one in four had not heard of mouth cancer. This new survey confirms that almost nine out ten in the U.K. now consider smoking to be a major risk factor. However, it is worrying that only one in two are aware that alcohol is a risk factor of head and neck cancer and that only one in seven are aware that HPV*** is a risk factor. If prevention is to be successful, awareness of these risk factors needs to be much higher. Much more still needs to be done to educate the public about mouth cancer.*"

The survey also shows that only most people (about nine in ten) have had no contact with a patient and so remain unaware of its debilitating effects. While the survey shows that the UK participants were generally more aware of the symptoms of head and neck cancer than those in the other European countries, it reveals that more needs to be done if we are to treat the disease earlier and reduce morbidity.

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. Every 3 hours someone in the UK will die from mouth cancer and the disease kills 1 in 2 people diagnosed due to late detection. Mouth Cancers have a higher proportion of deaths per number of cases than breast cancer, cervical cancer or skin melanoma

-ENDS-

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NOTES TO EDITORS

* The 'About Face' survey was conducted across seven European countries: France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the UK with 7,520 responses collected (1002 from the UK). The data and analysis was conducted by TNS Healthcare.

** Mouth Cancer Foundation Download: Mouth Cancer Awareness Action Week 2008 Press Pack <http://www.mouthcancer.org/mouth-cancer-awareness-week/press-resources-mouth-cancer.html> (last access Feb 2009)

*** HPV - Human Papillomavirus is the name for a common group of viruses. There are over 100 different types of HPV which affect the skin and the mucosa (the moist membranes that line parts of the body, such as the insides the mouth, throat, cervix and anus). Some types of HPV are known to increase the risk of developing particular types of cancer and are known as high-risk HPVs. Over 10 different types of high-risk HPV can be passed from one person to another. HPV is spread through skin contact, often during sex.

REFERENCES

1. 'About Face' Head and Neck Cancer Awareness EU Omnibus Survey, TNS Healthcare September 2008

2. Cancerbackup and MacMillan Cancer Support Website

<http://www.cancerbackup.org.uk/Cancertype/Headneck/General/Typesofheadneckcancer>

<http://www.cancerbackup.org.uk/Aboutcancer/Causes/Viruses/HPVandcancer> (last accessed Feb 2009)

3. Cancer Research UK Website CancerStats

<http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/types/larynx/?a=5441> and

<http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/types/oral/?a=54412> and

<http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/news/archive/pressreleases/2009/february/experts-predict-drop-lung-cancer>

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

More information about Mouth Cancer is available at the Mouth Cancer Foundation website

www.mouthcancerfoundation.org or by emailing info@mouthcancerfoundation.org