

Cancer Research UK "Commit to Beat Cancer" Lobby – Wednesday 3rd November 2010

The Objective of the Cancer Research UK Lobby of Parliament on Wednesday 3rd November was to ask that doctors should be:

1. granted increased access to diagnostic tests &
2. asked to record accurate data on the Stage at which Patients' cancers are diagnosed.

Despite the London-wide tube strike, over 70 Ambassadors joined the Lobby. Taxis were provided for us at the main London Railway Stations, so I joined Jean & Jim (from Bingley) & Tom (from Sleaford) in a cab from Kings Cross to the Lobby Headquarters in Great Smith Street, Westminster.

The Ambassadors' briefing included talks from Harpal Kumar (Chief Executive), Sarah Woolnough (Head of Policy) & an ex-MP, Lord Willis of Knaresborough. The focus of these talks - &, indeed, of the whole day - was very much on Early Diagnosis.

Cancer is not one disease (there are 200 different types of cancer ... that makes 200 problems) & each cancer is individual, even within the same type. Cancer Research UK is the only UK charity dedicated to beating ALL types of cancer & gets no Government money. Only by funding research into both the rare & the more common cancers will everyone have a chance.

We were told the most powerful meetings MPs can have is with their constituents & that the Lobby should be about winning the hearts & minds of our MPs.

Although survival rates overall have doubled over the past 40 years, the UK's cancer outcomes are poorer than those of our international neighbours. Sweden, Finland & parts of Germany, France, Canada & Australia have better outcomes than ours. With the rarer "Unmet Needs" cancers (some examples given were; Oesophageal Cancer, Endometrial Cancer & Pancreatic Cancer), improvements in the survival rates are not so high. As we were told, "We've come a long way, but we still have a long way to go."

In the UK, 260 MPs have pledged to the Cancer Research UK's "Commit to Beat Cancer" campaign, to:

- detect cancer earlier
- provide world class cancer treatment
- prevent more cancers
- tackle cancer inequalities
- protect the UK's research base

There are so many different symptoms for different cancers & it is clear that we need to increase awareness as well as changing the culture which leads people to delay seeking medical advice; British reserve? We mustn't bother the doctor? - Pah!!

After the briefings, batches of Ambassadors congregated to walk across Parliament Square – past the entrenched anti-war protesters – towards the Palace of Westminster.

My MP, Lynne Featherstone (Hornsey & Wood Green), was not in Westminster on the 3rd, but a neighbouring MP, Glenda Jackson (Hampstead & Kilburn), was kind enough to agree to being lobbied by Lynne's Ambassadors as well as by her own. I found her rather intimidating initially (okay, I admit it - my nerves got the better of me & I froze momentarily) but she quickly thawed & proved to be a compassionate & gracious lady. She confirmed she was very happy to put our requests to Government, to write to the Secretary of State for Health & to table questions in the

House on our behalf - but she was equally keen not to raise "false hopes".

The whole day was the most wonderful & inspiring experience & I'm so proud to have had the opportunity to be a part of it.

My greatest achievement? I got Cholangiocarcinoma mentioned in the Corridors of Power at least twice ... soon I hope no one will be able to say they haven't heard of it.

Cancer Research UK's Chief Executive, Harpal Kumar summed up the day beautifully; "Together, we WILL beat cancer". 🙏

(for a slide show of the Lobby, the link is

<http://www.cancercampaigns.org.uk/ambassadors/westminsterlobby/>)