

Press release – 23 January 2012

New Support Group helps to empower myeloma cancer patients and their families

A leading cancer charity, Myeloma UK, and Wye Valley NHS Trust have joined forces to raise awareness of a rare type of bone marrow cancer myeloma, and to help empower myeloma patients and their families.

Each year in the UK, nearly 4,000 people are diagnosed with myeloma. In Herefordshire, there are approximately 80 patients living with myeloma.

Myeloma is an increasingly common cancer affecting plasma cells in the bone marrow. Plasma cells are responsible for protecting the body against infection. There is currently no cure but newer treatments can halt myeloma for longer and improve quality of life.

Specialist cancer nurse, Rachel Price-Jones, who provides advice and guidance for myeloma patients at The County Hospital, recognised the need for a support network for myeloma patients and their families in Herefordshire.

Last year, Rachel joined forces with Myeloma UK and held a bake-a-thon fundraising event to get people in Herefordshire talking about myeloma, and build a network of patients and families to form a new Support Group.

Many local businesses supported the fundraiser and generous donations for the new Support Group towards running costs totalled £700.00.

Rachel Price-Jones, from Wye Valley NHS Trust, said: “It’s very important that we provide support for myeloma patients and their families. Multiple myeloma is a rare cancer that many people do not know about it until they are diagnosed with it”.

“We are empowering myeloma patients and their families by providing a holistic approach to help improve their health and well-being. At these meetings, patients, family members and carers have the opportunity to share their experiences in an informal and supportive setting with specialised support and advice available”.

John Ballantyne, myeloma patient, said: “the new support group has helped me to accept my diagnosis, given me a new focus and hope for the future”.

“Meeting other myeloma patients has made me realise that I am not alone, and their positive stories about living with myeloma for many years and still enjoying life has given me the incentive to do the same”.

Early meetings of the Support Group have gone well with good attendance and it is hoped that one of the patient representatives will lead future meetings. Patients and their families can access a wide range of information and support at these meetings, with key specialist speakers in attendance, welfare benefits advice, alternative therapies, and much more.

Rebecca Caulfield from Myeloma UK, said: “Support Groups are a very important way for myeloma patients and carers to meet each other, share experiences and learn about myeloma in a local, informal setting. Myeloma UK understands the time and commitment involved in the setting up

and running of Support Groups and is delighted to work alongside Rachel to provide this vital support network and raise awareness of myeloma in Herefordshire”.

Myeloma UK is the only organisation in the UK dealing exclusively with myeloma. Myeloma UK informs and supports people affected by myeloma and helps improve treatment and standards of care through research, education, campaigning and raising awareness.

To find out more about the local Myeloma Support Group visit the Myeloma UK website www.myeloma.org.uk or call 01432 355444 ext 4259, email Rachel.Price-jones@wvt.nhs.uk

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Notes to editor:

- Wye Valley NHS Trust is the first integrated provider of acute, community and adult social care in England.
- The key principles of the organisation are to improve the health and well being of the people we serve in Herefordshire and the surrounding areas.
- With an estimated annual turnover of around £160million, we employ around 2,500 staff. As the first integrated provider of acute, community and social care in England, we aim to build new relationships between our staff, patients, service users and their carers, and with the wider community.
- We are a clinical and practitioner-led organisation owned by our local community and staff.
- We are also working towards Foundation Trust status with the aim of achieving it in 2013.

For further information please contact:

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