

News release

PR 011/12

30 January 2012

New campaign urges: be alert to the signs and symptoms of bowel cancer

Herefordshire's health community is supporting the *Be Clear on Bowel Cancer* campaign launched this week by the Government.

The campaign will run from 30 January for two months and will incorporate TV, radio, print and online advertising. It aims to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of bowel cancer and encourage those with these symptoms to see their doctor.

Bowel cancer is England's second most common cancer, with around 33,000 new cases each year. It affects both men and women and is responsible for more than 13,000 deaths a year. Nine out of ten people diagnosed with bowel cancer are aged over 55 and those with a family history are at more risk.

General awareness of the early symptoms is low, but early detection of bowel cancer makes it more treatable.

It is estimated that 1,700 additional lives could be saved each year if England's bowel cancer survival rate matched the best in Europe.

The main signs and symptoms of bowel cancer are blood in poo or looser poo for three weeks or more.

Dr Rupert Ransford, Bowel Cancer Screening Specialist, at Wye Valley NHS Trust, said:

"We have successfully treated a large number of patients with bowel cancer in recent years. Patients with bowels that are looser or have blood in them for more than 3 weeks need to see their own GP early".

"It's very straightforward for your GP to see you and send you for further tests if necessary. We have a very good team of doctors and nurses specialised in seeing patients with bowel problems. If the tests are normal it is very reassuring. If we do find a bowel cancer then we know the chance of successful treatment and cure is far higher if the growth is found at early stage. Unfortunately, if symptoms are ignored the cancer can spread and make it very difficult to treat".

"Please see your GP if you have symptoms for 3 weeks or longer and together we can beat bowel cancer".

Dr Arif Mahmood, Consultant in Public Health Medicine NHS Herefordshire, added: "Bowel cancer is the second biggest cancer killer in England, claiming more than 13,000 lives each year. Thousands of lives could be saved if people were aware of the signs and symptoms of

bowel cancer, as finding it early improves the chances of successful treatment. We believe that this campaign will play a key role in saving lives by encouraging people to see their GP if they experience symptoms of bowel cancer.”

For further information about the signs and symptoms of bowel cancer, please visit www.nhs.uk/bowelcancer

Ends

Carla Preston (01432) 260098