

Blood Cancer Alliance Major Conditions Strategy

Blood cancer is the UK's third biggest cancer killer, causing over 15,000 deaths a year. Yet, from awareness, to diagnosis, to information and support, blood cancer patients are less likely to have their needs fully met than patients with the four most common cancers.

As part of its Forgotten Fifth campaign, the Blood Cancer Alliance is calling for the Major Conditions Strategy to deliver five commitments to improve outcomes for people with blood cancer:

STOP DELAYS TO BLOOD CANCER DIAGNOSIS

- a) Blood cancer patients experience longer delays compared with other common cancers.
- b) 3 in 10 blood cancer diagnoses are delivered via emergency presentation at A&E.
- c) The number of blood cancer patients who had to see their GP five or more times before being referred to a specialist is more than double that of patients with other cancers.

IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF BLOOD CANCERS

- a) Only 60% of blood cancer patients report complete understanding of their condition, 10% fewer than the average reported by solid tumour cancer patients (breast 77%, lung 76%, prostate 79% and colorectal 79%).
- b) Minority ethnic blood cancer patients don't feel as informed in decision-making about their care compared to the whole patient population (3% vs 27%).
- c) There needs to be greater focus on ensuring information is presented to patients with the same clarity, especially when English is not their first language, as it is to other cancer patients.

INCREASE AWARENESS OF BLOOD CANCERS

- a) Only one Government-sponsored national cancer public awareness campaign specifically mentions blood cancer symptoms, despite over half the population not knowing these symptoms.
- b) Whilst the Government is planning to cover blood cancer awareness in a wider generic non-specific symptoms campaign, concerns remain this won't go far enough to raise awareness.
- c) The Government should commit to improving public awareness through a specific campaign focused on blood cancer symptoms exclusively.

ADDRESS INEQUALITIES IN ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR ALL BLOOD CANCER PATIENTS

- a) Blood cancer patients are less likely to be offered information about psychological support than other cancer patients (86% to 88%).
- b) Almost half of minority ethnic blood cancer patients didn't feel as though they were taken seriously when explaining their symptoms to the GP. Some reported experiencing discrimination within their diagnosis journey.
- c) Blood cancer patients report diagnosis's being delivered with less sensitivity than the experience reported by people with other cancers, particularly minority ethnic blood

cancer patients, with over 50% reporting having received their diagnosis in an insensitive way.

IMPROVE ACCESS TO NEW BLOOD CANCER TREATMENTS

- a) With few surgical options available, blood cancer patients are more reliant on pharmaceutical treatment innovation than those with solid tumours. They are more likely to be affected by challenges in NHS access to medicines, such as lack of flexibility in pricing or changes to NICE methods and processes.
- b) Blood cancer patients must have greater and more equitable access to clinical trials, only achievable through committed investment in the workforce and clinical research.