CANCER AWARENESS IN THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY
INFORMATION SHEET

WHAT IS THE AIM OF THIS LEAFLET?

The aim of this leaflet is to improve cancer awareness amongst the Muslim families settled in UK. The incidence of cancer has increased by more than a third over the past 20 years. By 2020 it is estimated that one in two people in the UK will get cancer in their lifetime (Macmillan Cancer Support). Cancer can affect anyone regardless of age, religion, language or ethnic origin. The research evidence shows that cancer awareness is low amongst the Muslim community in the UK. Also, knowledge about National Cancer Screening Programmes is also low as a result the bowel, breast and cervical cancer screening uptakes are much lower in the Muslim community.

A team based at Sheffield Hallam University in collaboration with the Manchester Breast Screening Service recently undertook a number of community meetings in Sheffield and Manchester with Muslim men and women speaking Somali, Arabic, Urdu, Bengali and other languages to explore their views about cancer and to identify factors that would facilitate earlier presentation with cancer. The Muslim men and women all expressed a clear need to have language specific information on cancer risks, symptoms, prevention and treatment.

WHAT IS CANCER?

The organs and tissues of our body are made up of tiny building blocks called cells. Cancer is a disease of these cells and is caused by an uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells which may happen in any part of the body. The abnormal cells grow more rapidly than normal cells and eventually form a cancerous lump. Then the cancerous lump competes with normal cells for nutrients and blood supply. Eventually the cancerous cells may spread into the bloodstream or grow into surrounding structures which may make it more difficult to cure or even impossible to cure. The earlier the cancer is detected the better chance there is of a cure and living longer.
In the UK, about 325,000 people were diagnosed with cancer in 2010, that’s around 890 people every day. The most common cancers are breast cancer, lung cancer, prostate cancer and bowel cancer.

**WHAT ARE VARIOUS TYPES OF CANCER?**

There are more than 200 types of cancer, each with different risk factors, symptoms and treatments. Most cancers are named from the organ where they start. For example, lung cancer starts in the lung, and breast cancer starts in the breast. If a cancer is not treated, it can spread into the organs near to where it started growing (apart from blood cancer).

**WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS FOR CANCER?**

Cancer can develop at any age, but it is most common in older people. More than three out of five cancers are diagnosed in people aged 65 and over. There is no single dominant cause for any type of cancer. However there are certain risk factors that increase the chance that a person might develop cancer in his/her lifetime. The most common risk factors for cancers (according to Cancer Research UK) are:

- Growing older
- Tobacco smoking, chewing
- Sunlight, exposure to ionising radiation
- Certain chemicals and other substances
- Some viruses
- Certain hormones
- Family history of cancer
- Alcohol
- Poor diet, lack of physical activity, or being overweight

**CAN CANCER BE PREVENTED?**

Certain risk factors such as ageing, gender, genetic factors and family history, cannot be changed. Cancer often has more than one known cause and sometimes the exact cause is not recognised. However, some of the risk factors which are related to personal behaviours such as alcohol, smoking, poor diet and physical inactivity may increase your risk of developing several types of cancers.
You can help yourself by:

- Eating healthy food; eating more fruits and vegetables and less red meat, and processed (fast) foods
- Ensuring regular exercise and physical activity to maintain healthy body weight
- Stop smoking, and reduce your alcohol intake
- Going for regular health checks and attending cancer screening.

Whilst adopting a healthy lifestyle doesn't guarantee that you won't get a cancer, it may reduce your risk. With regular preventative health checks, increase being aware of cancer symptoms, reporting symptoms early to your GP and attending regular screening will increase the chance of the cancer being detected early and also increase the chances of your treatment being successful.

The NHS has introduced three national screening programmes for promoting the early detection of breast, bowel and cervical cancer. Screening means testing people in order to identify the early stages of a disease before they have any symptoms. Ask your GP for more information about these.

SOME MUSLIM BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CANCER

There is a considerable knowledge gap regarding cancer symptoms and the risks of developing cancer among the Muslim community. Some of the views from focus group discussions with Muslim Community members illustrate some of the beliefs about cancer.

- Cancer is a taboo and has a stigma attached to it (Pakistani women).
- I know the word cancer but I do not know what it means (Somali women)
- We hear about cancer but we do not have any specific knowledge of it (Pakistani women).

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I used to throw away the appointment letters for cervical screening (Somali women)

We are only told about Diabetes and not Cancer (South Asian men)

Cancer is disease for white people (Somali men)

Everyone can get cancer. It's a test from Allah and Qadr 9 (Pakistani & Somali women)

The notion of going to get yourself checked out by strangers, sometimes men, but even embarrassed in the presence of women, puts people off so don’t want to know. Men won’t go to see doctors for same reason. GPs are not empathetic to your needs (Pakistani women).

We do not know how to examine ourselves or if we find something what to do with this finding (South Asian women)

We are Muslims. We believe illnesses are from Allah. We should make Dua (prayer) to Allah to protect us and keep us in good health. (Pakistani women)

The focus groups also found that Muslims hold beliefs that are not necessarily true.

Cancer Myths and Realities

Myth: Cancer is disease for white people
Reality: Cancer can affect anyone.

Myth: If you have cancer you will die
Reality: The risk of dying with cancer has decreased since 1970s. Most people with cancer are cured with timely and proper treatment. For instance 8 in 10 women with breast cancer are cured but this relies on detecting it at an early stage.

Myth: Cancer is a test from Allah. We should be grateful and have patience
Reality: Allah has created cures for the illnesses as well and as Muslims we are required to seek treatment for any disease/illness that may occur

Myth: Multiple screening causes cancer
Reality: Screening tests help detect cancer. If there are any risk associated with any type of screening, the health care professional which explain it to you before performing screening
**WHAT ISLAM (RELIGION) TELLS ABOUT HEALTH PREVENTION?**

Islam provides a complete guide for living a healthy life. Health promotion practices are part of the Islamic faith. Instruction about healthy practices are found in the Quran and the Prophet Mohammed - *Peace Be Upon Him* (PBUH) Hadith which teaches Muslims to refrain from unhealthy practices and encourage Muslims to adapt a healthy lifestyle.

- Alcohol is forbidden in Islam.
- Islam says all intoxicants are forbidden (even a small amount).
- Smoking is harmful to the body and Muslims are forbidden to harm themselves or others. Smoking causes severe harm to human health and leads to death. Allah has forbidden self-destruction: "Kill not yourselves, for verily Allah has been to you most merciful (Quran 3:29)". The companions of the Prophet, PBUH understood that this verse forbade Muslim to expose himself to dangers or destruction.
- Tobacco is a devitalize intoxicant therefore according to Messenger of God (PBUH) all inebriating and devitalize substances are banned.
- Islam focuses on diet as one of the most important methods of maintaining health.
- Exercise is part of a Muslim’s daily activity through five times daily prayer.
WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF CANCER?
Here is a list of most common symptoms of cancer, however, there are more than 200 types of cancer and it isn’t possible to list all the symptoms that could be caused by every one of them. If you have a symptom that is not included in this list and it hasn’t gone away after a few weeks, go to see your GP.

The following symptoms can be a symptom of cancer however these can also be related to many less serious illnesses. It is important that you get your symptoms checked out.

- A lump somewhere on your body
- Changes in a mole on your skin
- A cough or hoarseness that won't go away
- A change in bowel habits
- Difficulty in swallowing or continuing indigestion
- Any abnormal bleeding
- A sore or ulcer of the skin that won't heal
- Difficulty passing urine
- Blood in urine
- Unexplained weight loss
- Unexplained pain
- Feeling very tired all the time
- Skin changes
- Nipple changes or a lump in the breast
- Unexplained night sweats
- Breathlessness

If you notice any changes in your body that are not normal for you, please speak to your doctor or practice nurse straight away.

HOW CANCER IS TREATED?
Cancers are normally treated with surgery (removal of a lump or tumour through operation), chemotherapy or hormone therapies and radiotherapy or mixture of these procedures depending upon the types of cancer and their growth. However, many cases of cancer are treated effectively using chemotherapy (powerful cancer-killing medication) and radiotherapy (the controlled use of high radiation on the affected part of body).
Side effects of these therapies can occur (e.g. tiredness, sore skin at the treatment area and hair loss) but subside in the later phase of treatment.

**Breast Cancer**

*Breast cancer* is where cancerous (malignant) cells are found in the breast tissue. It is the most common cancer in women. Annually around 50,000 cases are detected in the UK and 8 out of 10 breast cancers are found in women aged 50 and over. The four main risk factors for breast cancer are ones we can’t do anything about i.e. gender, aging, certain genes and having significant family history.

**Breast screening,** introduced in 1989, involves taking x-rays of the breast (mammogram). The procedure detects breast cancers when they are too small to be realised, palpate or felt. A recent review (called the Marmot review) concluded that routine breast cancer screening reduces the risk of dying from breast cancer although there is a one per cent (1 in 100) chance of having a cancer diagnosed and treated that would never have caused problems if the women had not been screened. All women between 47 and 73 years old are invited for breast screening. The NHS offers breast screening every three years and should get their first invitation before their 50th birthday. Women over 73 years can still attend screening but have to refer themselves. They can either ask their GP to refer them or ring their local screening centre directly. The local screening centres are sensitive to the varying needs of the women. For example, the Muslim woman can ask for a woman to undertake their mammogram. You will receive a letter following your mammogram telling you of the results of the mammogram.

**Signs of breast cancer:** Things you need to look out for are: any lumps, thickening or bumpy areas; changes in appearance; discomfort or pain; nipple discharge, a rash, red areas that won’t heal; and change in your nipple position (pointing differently or pulled in).

**Treatment:** You may be offered surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy or hormone therapy. You may be given one or a combination of these.
Bowel Cancer

Bowel cancer is a general term for cancer that begins in the large bowel. Depending on where the cancer starts, bowel cancer is sometimes called colon or rectal cancer. It usually grows very slowly over a period of up to 10 years, before it starts to spread and affect other parts of the body. About 1 in 20 people in the UK will develop bowel cancer during their lifetime. It is the third most common cancer in the UK (about 42,000 people are diagnosed each year), and the second leading cause of cancer deaths (over 16,000 people dying from it each year). In 3 out of 4 bowel cancer cases it occurs in people aged 65 and over.

Bowel screening helps detect bowel cancer at an early stage. It can also detect polyps (small growths on the inner lining of the colon (large bowel) or rectum. People aged between 60 and 74 years are sent a stool test kit through the post every two years. Regular bowel cancer screening has been shown to reduce the risk of dying from bowel cancer by 16% (Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, 2006.) It is a self-screening test in which you collect small samples of your bowel motions on a special card that you then send to a laboratory for testing in a hygienically sealed, prepaid envelope. Only around 2 out of every 100 people tested are likely to have blood in their stool sample and then they will be called for further investigation at the hospital.

Bowel cancer symptoms include a change in your bowel habit; bleeding from the bottom or blood in your poo; pain in your abdomen (tummy); a lump in your abdomen; unexplained tiredness, dizziness or breathlessness; and unexplained weight loss.

Treatment of bowel cancer is through surgery, chemotherapy or specialist radiotherapy. You may be given one or a combination of these.
Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer is the cancer in the cervix (neck of the womb). The womb and cervix are part of a woman’s reproductive system. Almost 3,400 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer in the UK each year and around 750 women die of cervical cancer each year. It is the most common cancer in women under 35 years old.

Cervical screening, introduced in 1988, is offered to women aged between 25 and 64 (women between the ages of 25 and 49 will be invited every three years and women between the ages of 50 and 64 every five years). Early detection and treatment can prevent around 75% of cancer development. The screening test involves a nurse or doctor taking a small sample of cells from the surface of your cervix for examination. You will be invited by your doctor to undertake test.

Causes of cervical cancer: Human papilloma virus (HPV) is the major cause of the cervical cancer. It is found to be more common if you have had several sexual partners or have had a sexual partner who has had several other partners; if you smoke; if had first sex at an early age; and take immunosuppressant drugs (for example, after an organ transplant).

Treatment of cervical cancer is through surgery, radiotherapy or chemotherapy. You may be given one or a combination of these.

Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer develops when cells mutate and multiply uncontrollably in the prostate. The prostate is a small gland in the pelvis found only in men. About the size of a walnut, it is located between the penis and the bladder. Because of its location prostate cancer often affects urination, ejaculation and albeit rarely defecation. It is the most common cancer among men and the risk; about 41,000 men in the UK are diagnosed with prostate cancer each year and 10,000 die from the disease. Prostate cancer is less common in men below 50 years of age and
the average age at diagnosis is 70 to 74 years. The risk is greater in men having a family history of prostate cancer and black African and Caribbean men.

**Prostate cancer symptoms** include trouble having or keeping an erection (impotence); blood in the urine; pain in the spine, hips, ribs, or other bones; weakness or numbness in the legs or feet; and loss of bladder or bowel control.

**Prostate cancer screening:** A small sample of blood is taken from a vein in your arm and sent to the laboratory to measure the level of Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA). Sometime Digital Rectal Examination (DRE) and Trans-rectal Ultrasound and biopsy are also conducted.

**Treatment:** You may be offered surgery or radiotherapy. Sometimes chemotherapy or hormone therapies are also suggested. You may be given one or a combination of these.

**Lung Cancer**

**Lung cancer** is the second most common cancer in the UK; about 42,000 people are diagnosed every year. In most people, lung cancer is related to cigarette smoking. Smoking causes nearly 9 out of 10 cases and further 3 out of 100 cases of lung cancer are caused by exposure to second hand smoke in non-smokers (passive smoking).

**Lung cancer symptoms** may include having a cough most of the time; a change in a cough you have had for a long time; being short of breath; coughing up phlegm (sputum) with signs of blood in it; an ache or pain when breathing or coughing; loss of appetite and weight; and tiredness.

**Lung cancer treatment:** If you observe certain symptoms, contact your doctor who will do general health checks and will examine your breathing using a small device called a spirometer. If required, your doctor will refer you to hospital for a chest X-ray or CT scan or blood test. You may be offered surgery or radiotherapy or chemotherapy or combination of these for treatment.
WHERE TO GET FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT?

Firstly: If you notice any changes in your body that are not normal for you, please speak to your GP straight away.

Secondly: Attend regular preventative health checks and advice and attend screening in order to ensure cancers are detected early.

Finally: For further information contact the following agencies or visit their webpage (the NHS Cancer Screening website also has translated information in your language).

- NHS Cancer Screening Programmes website for England: http://www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk; or call 0800 707 60 60
- Visit the Cancer Research UK website at www.cancerresearchuk.org;
- Visit the Macmillan Cancer Support website at www.macmillan.org.uk; or
- Call NHS111, or visit www.nhs.uk

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Centre for Health and Social Care Research
Sheffield Hallam University

مزید معلومات اورمدم کہاں سے ملے گی؟

ایک: اگر آپ انہیں جسم میں کوئی غیرمعمولی تبدیلی دیکھتے ہو، براہ کرم فوراً آپ لیے جی بھی ساپت کھیجے دو: باقاعدہ طور پر پروپنٹ متعالیٰ اور سکریننگ کے لئے جیاں اے تا کہ کیسے چکو آئے نا پیس میں پس لگ جانے۔

اہم: مزید معلومات کی لئی ڈرگ نئی سے رابطہ کریں کہ یہ کیسے وی بہ پچ ملاحظہ کیجیے (این ایچ ایس کینسر سکریننگ تے ویبسائٹ پر) کی زبان مین ترمیم بے موجود بے۔

- کینسر سکریننگ پروگرام ویبسائٹ برائے انگریزی: http://www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk
- یا 0800 707 60 60 یہ فون کھینچے
- کینسر ریسرچ یوکی کی ویبسائٹ ملاحظہ کیجیے: www.cancerresearchuk.org
- میکملین کینسر سپورٹ کی ویبسائٹ ملاحظہ کی: www.macmillan.org.uk;
- این ایچ ایس 111 فون کھینچے یا ملاحظہ کیئے: www.nhs.uk

یہ ورک شیف بلوئر سیکٹر اینڈ کینسر ریسرچ، شیف بلوئر شیف بلوئر سیکٹر کے تحت قومی (ثاثفکرینگ کمیون) کینسر کیئن، اور ملک کے اس اصول ساہکار سے متعلق ہے (ثاثفکرینگ سیکٹر على این بلوئر شیف) اور اس کے ساتھ مہمی (این ایچ ایس)۔

مالی مدد HIEF HEFCE کینسر سیکورن سے ملی۔

سپتمبر 2014