

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Cancer Widower Launches Campaign to Overhaul Cancer Drug Development

*21 March 2016 - A 49 year old man who recently lost his wife to cancer has started a campaign calling for an overhaul of the system for developing cancer drugs to address profiteering and commercial conflicts of interest.*

Recently bereaved cancer widower John Pears has started a campaign called ‘**Dying for a Cure**’ (<http://dyingforacure.org>), which already has the backing of a number of cancer charities, to highlight commercial and political issues that are holding back cancer cures and pricing drugs out of reach of patients.

Mr Pears says “*Like many in my situation, I became immersed in the world of cancer and was shocked to discover how cancer has become one of the most lucrative markets on the planet, with annual revenues from cancer drugs in excess of \$100bn (£70bn) and the highest profit margins of any major industry in the world.*”

The current system for developing cancer drugs depends primarily on private investment from pharmaceutical companies and, as investors demand good returns on their investment, Mr Pears points out that it’s no surprise that what we’ve ended up with is very *profitable* drugs rather than very *effective* ones - the current system is letting patients down due to:

- a lack of regulations to curb excessive profit margins on drug prices;
- a failure to attract investment in promising discoveries with limited commercial potential;
- a failure to reward investment in drugs with bigger therapeutic benefits.

Mr Pears is not alone in believing that this *tug of war* between profits and public health acts like a handbrake on progress – in September 2015, the Council of Europe voted 94% in favour of a European-wide Resolution to tackle this very issue and recently Sir Robert Thompson, the Queen’s long-term physician and former President of the Royal College of Physicians said that “*Drug companies are developing medicines they can profit from, rather than those which are likely to be the most beneficial*”.

Sue De Cesare, Executive Director of Yes To Life, one of the cancer charities backing the campaign, said “*Cancer has reach epidemic proportions but we are choosing to make money rather than save lives – its criminal.*”

The ‘Dying for a Cure’ campaign is asking cancer charities and the general public to back an online petition calling for an overhaul of the cancer drug development process, so that it puts the needs of patients first.

## **Notes to Editors**

For all media enquiries please contact John Pears: [info@dyingforacure.org](mailto:info@dyingforacure.org) or 01483 282256

### Dying for a Cure Campaign (<http://dyingforacure.org>)

The Dying for a Cure campaign was started by cancer widower John Pears following the loss of his wife to ovarian cancer in October 2015. The campaign is calling for an overhaul of the way the cancer drugs are developed, to address fundamental conflicts of interest that are slowing down the development of affordable and effective cancer treatments.

A petition set up by the Dying for a Cure campaign is urging the UK Government to:

- acknowledge problems caused by conflicts of interest within the pharmaceutical industry
- introduce new regulations and market reforms to address these problems
- investigate options to reduce the costs of bringing new drugs to market
- introduce new regulations to ensure cost reflectivity of prices for drugs under patent
- consider public funding for drug discoveries with limited commercial potential
- work with the World Health Organisation to consider alternative drug development models
- to work with other countries to agree a goal and deadline to cure the majority of cancers

Five cancer charities have already come forward to back the Dying for a Cure campaign:

- Brainstrust
- Cancer of Unknown Primary Foundation
- New Approaches to Cancer
- Race Against Blood Cancer
- Yes To Life

The campaign petition can be found at: <https://www.change.org/p/uk-government-overhaul-cancer-drug-development>

The Council of Europe Resolution to tackle conflicts of interest in the pharmaceutical industry can be found at: <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewPDF.asp?FileID=22154&lang=en>

### John Pears

John Pears is a 49 year old man living in Surrey. His background includes a 17 year corporate career working at the most senior level of one of the UK's largest companies, operating in both competitive and regulated market environments. Mr Pears went on to set up his own business and founded the global online route planning service plotaroute.com.

Mr Pears lost his wife Beata to ovarian cancer in October 2015 at the age of just 41 following a three year battle with the illness. Inspired by his wife's courage and strength, he is planning to climb Kilimanjaro in September 2015 to raise money for charities that supported her. More information is available about Mr Pears' fundraising on his website

[www.KilimanjaroforCancer.co.uk](http://www.KilimanjaroforCancer.co.uk)