

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

4000 Back Petition to Stop Profiteering from Cancer

29 June 2016 – Just days before the planned launch of the revamped Cancer Drugs Fund, which is expected to result in more cancer drugs being dropped by the NHS, a petition calling on the Government to tackle profiteering from cancer passes 4000 signatures.



The 'Dying for a Cure' campaign (<http://dyingforacure.org>), which was set up by cancer widower John Pears to push for reforms to cancer R&D, has now attracted over 4000 signatures on its online petition. The campaign has been highlighting flaws in the current patent-based system for funding new cancer drugs, which enable private drug companies to cherry-pick the most profitable research discoveries to invest in and to dictate any price they like for new medicines they create, regardless of the public contribution to their discovery.

Rising prices for cancer drugs have become a big issue in recent years. In 2015, the NHS had to drop 36 cancer treatments, as it could no longer afford them. In the next few weeks, NICE, the organisation that decides whether or not a drug is cost-effective for the NHS, is expected to axe even more cancer drugs following a revamp of the overspent Cancer Drugs Fund.

Over the last fifteen years, the proportion of new cancer treatments deemed by NICE to be too expensive for the NHS has increased three-fold – **half of all new cancer treatments are now too costly for routine use by the NHS** [1]:

- 2001-2005: 15%
- 2006-2010: 37%
- 2011-2015: 49%

Meanwhile, drug company profits have also soared – in 2015, the top seven cancer drugs firms, which control 70% of worldwide sales, made an average profit margin of 20.5% [2].

Mr Pears points out *“Drug companies often try to defend high prices by saying that new drugs are expensive to develop, but R&D costs are being recouped many times over, so the companies are simply taking advantage of a lack of competition and regulation.”*

At present the Government either pays the high price demanded by the drug companies, or it refuses to pay, leaving patients to be treated with older, less effective medicines that offer reduced life-expectancy. Some groups have called for NHS price caps to be raised but there are concerns that this will simply fuel further price escalation.

Mr Pears states *“We won’t solve the problem of high cancer drug prices by just giving drug companies more money whenever they ask for it - they are holding patients to ransom and already make jaw-dropping profit margins. We need to stand up to the drug companies and take back control of the situation.”* He adds, *“This isn’t just a tragedy for cancer patients, who are being condemned to an early death, but also a kick in the teeth for the public who generously raised money to help pay for the discovery and development of these new drugs.”*

Along with other patient advocacy groups, the Dying for a Cure campaign is now urging the Government to demand fair prices for new medicines or to use its legal powers to obtain them from a more affordable source.

Notes to Editors

For all media enquiries please contact John Pears: info@dyingforacure.org or 01483 282256

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

The Dying for a Cure campaign is calling on the UK Government to reform the whole process for developing cancer drugs, so that it focuses on maximising benefits for patients rather than profits.

The campaign has identified three specific failings of the current R&D system:

- **profiteering** - a failure to curb excessive profit margins on drug prices, leading to drugs being priced out of reach of patients;
- **marginal innovation** - a failure to reward development of drugs with greater therapeutic benefit, in order to speed up progress
- **missed opportunities** - a failure to attract investment in promising discoveries with limited commercial potential, or to provide alternative public funding.

An online petition set up by the Dying for a Cure campaign is urging the UK Government to implement market reforms to address these issues. The campaign petition can be found at: <https://www.change.org/p/uk-government-stop-profiteering-from-cancer>

More supporting information is available on the Key Facts page of the campaign’s website: <http://dyingforacure.org/key-facts>

References

1. NICE cancer statistics: <https://www.nice.org.uk/news/nice-statistics>
2. Cancer drug company profits: <http://dyingforacure.org/key-facts>

John Pears

John Pears is a 49 year old man living in Surrey. Mr Pears lost his wife to ovarian cancer in October 2015 at the age of 41, following a three year battle with her illness. Inspired by his wife's courage and strength and frustrated by the lack of action by the Government to tackle the commercial exploitation of cancer, Mr Pears decided to set up the Dying for a Cure campaign. He is also fundraising for charities that helped his wife and is planning to climb Kilimanjaro in September 2016. More information is available about Mr Pears' fundraising on his website www.KilimanjaroforCancer.co.uk