

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Heartburn Cancer UK – 05/09/19

For immediate release

# **New campaign asks the Burning Question.....is it really just Heartburn? The answer could save your life**

A new awareness campaign, launched by Heartburn Cancer UK, a charity based in Basingstoke, hopes to save lives by getting more people to question – and act on – a *very* common condition which can be an early warning sign that something is seriously wrong.

**Despite medical advances, the UK still has the highest levels of oesophageal cancer in the world. Every year some 8,000 people die in the UK from the disease – 1 a day in Hampshire. It is also the 4<sup>th</sup> biggest cause of cancer deaths among males.**

This disappointing league table topping position is blamed mainly on late diagnosis. Not enough people in the UK spot, and take action, on early signs that the disease is developing.

People are unaware that simple, straightforward heartburn should not merely be dismissed.

It can be an early symptom of the disease, and getting it checked out – if it stays for more than three weeks – could save your life.

To encourage more people to question the condition, Heartburn Cancer UK has launched ‘The Burning Question’ Awareness Campaign. The campaign will raise awareness to prevent deaths from the disease by spotting the early warning signs.

Mimi McCord, Heartburn Cancer UK’s Chairman said: “The new campaign is aimed at making people think more and ignore less.

“Being more questioning could just save your life.

“Question yourself, has it been there for 3 weeks or more? Do you rely on antacids like Gaviscon, Rennie to get you through the day? If the answer is yes, then book an appointment and question your GP about getting it checked out.”

Mimi knows first-hand the potentially devastating consequences of not questioning persistent heartburn.

Her husband Michael died just 9 weeks after being diagnosed of oesophageal cancer aged 47. Shocking for Mimi and their children Kate and Jonathan. Michael regularly took antacids for heartburn never realising it was a warning sign of something more.

The first part of the Burning Question awareness campaign – initially based on radio adverts – has already boosted referrals for endoscopies in the area.

Bold advertising on buses and at train stations from Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September will kick off the next stage of the plan in Basingstoke and North Hants including Winchester, Andover, Fleet and Alton.

Shortly followed by the Heartburn 100k Challenge which will be pulling out all the stops to raise funds to expand the awareness campaign into different counties across the country and set up more support groups

More information can also be found on the Heartburn Cancer UK website at

<http://www.heartburncanceruk.org>

Ends

**Date 05/09/19**

**Editor's Note**

For more information contact Fiona Labrooy on 01256 338668 or 07939088680

**More about the launch event**

11.45, Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2019

Stagecoach Bus Depot, Rankine Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG24 8PP

Opportunity to interview/photograph MP Maria Miller, Political Patron for Heartburn Cancer UK

Opportunity to interview/photograph Heartburn Cancer UKs Chairman Mimi McCord.

Photo opportunity with one of the buses advertising the campaign.

Opportunity to see the poster campaign at Basingstoke train station

We can arrange for interviews to be set up with Tim Underwood, who is Professor of Gastrointestinal Surgery and Head of Cancer Sciences Academic Unit at the University of Southampton and also the clinical trustee for Heartburn Cancer UK. This could be organised before or after the launch event.

Opportunities to interview a, support group members helped by the charity, fundraisers, and a good news success story from early diagnosis, a CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group) rep can also be arranged.

**More about the campaign**

To broaden awareness to the general public of the danger of persistent heartburn (3 weeks or more) and the link between Barrett's Oesophagus and Oesophageal Cancer (Adenocarcinoma). Highlighting the importance of seeking medical advice for further investigation as early diagnosis can help save lives. 500,000 will be unaware that they have the precursory condition of Barrett's oesophagus. Although 90% of these people will not develop Oesophageal Cancer - 50,000 will. Often diagnosis will be too late to save them.

Increase referrals for endoscopies which are the first diagnostic test.

Increase awareness through GP Surgeries and in Pharmacies.

Activities including Radio Campaign, Press Launch, bus and rail station advertising, hard hitting video. Pilot launched in Basingstoke and North Hampshire (including Winchester, Andover, Fleet, Alton)

The Heartburn 100k Challenge to raise essential funds to be able to grow and share the awareness campaign in other counties across the country.

A growing and increased presence and awareness campaign across social media including twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn. This will also provide other supporting information, research progress, education and information about support groups.

The opportunity to set up new groups that support sufferers as we expand the awareness campaign.

Engage more volunteers and fundraisers

To engage the press, media and radio to support the campaign and share our message

### Photos/Media

Our radio ad is attached and please see below examples of a couple of our advertising posters for the campaign and our campaign video.



<https://vimeo.com/342950927/418137451c>

### More about Heartburn Cancer UK (HCUK)

Heartburn Cancer UK is a national charity, originally called the McCord Oesophageal Cancer Fund, which was founded in memory of Michael McCord who died from oesophageal cancer in 2002. Michael's death was preventable had he been aware of the danger of long term persistent heartburn and had appropriate investigations. He is one of thousands who die each year unnecessarily.

### Advice on how to avoid oesophageal cancer

See your Doctor if you regularly experience any of the following symptoms:

Persistent burning feeling

Food sticking/difficulty in swallowing

Pain under breastbone or in chest

Acid taste in mouth

Hoarse voice

Coughing

Regurgitation