



Brain Tumours: why should we be concerned?

Of course, it is never going to affect you. Or your family. We hope. Yet the fact of the matter is that most of us know first or second-hand of someone who has been struck down by this particularly miserable cancer.

Why is it so different from other cancers? It is a particularly unpleasant beast. The fact is that aggressive brain cancers gradually take away what it means to be a functioning, independent individual. As it progresses, the ability to think, to communicate, to speak, to move and even the personality are under threat. Severe unremitting headaches and seizures can make life miserable. Whereas people with many other types of cancer can continue with a reasonable quality of life for long periods, tumours affecting the brain and nervous system will often result in a ban on driving and a significant impact on mobility, independence and quality of life.

Who does it affect? It affects all ages from children to the elderly. It may surprise you to know it kills more people under the age of forty than any other cancer and is becoming more common – particularly down here. As yet, for the majority of those affected by the most aggressive type, there is no cure. The figures speak for themselves. Only 15 out of 100 people diagnosed with a brain tumour will be alive 5 years later.

So what is being done to deal with this sinister harbinger? There are many different types and grades of tumour. Some are rapidly growing and despite best modern care, kill within eighteen months or less. At the other end of the scale relatively benign tumours, especially those arising from the lining of the brain, grow only slowly and respond to surgery.

Why Local? Brain Tumour Research UK supports four Centres of Excellence in this country with an annual grant. Plymouth is proud to be one of them, alongside Imperial College London, The Institute of Cancer Research and Queen Mary's University London. Cornwall and Devon's specialist service is provided from the regional centre at Derriford. The discoveries made by Professor Oliver Hanneman and his team of scientists are already being applied and improving the outlook for patients in Cornwall, Devon and beyond – proof if needed, of the practical benefits of local medical research.

Why does the charity need your support? We are not a huge charity. But we are local, lean and light on our feet. We like to feel we punch above our weight. Often small grants made in a timely manner for a piece of equipment or part of a salary can make all the difference between a larger project going ahead or not.

Your support for those scientists and doctors who are working for all of us who live in Cornwall and Devon, is already making a difference. If you can, please help continue the fight against this and other cancers which are taking our loved ones before their time. Thank you.

Professor Adrian Copplestone Chair, FRCP, FRCPath
Mr. Denis Wilkins FRCS Trustee