

Surviving breast cancer 'is not enough,' warns Breast Cancer Campaign

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Women are living longer after breast cancer but simply surviving is not enough, Pamela Goldberg, Chief Executive, Breast Cancer Campaign, said today.

Speaking at the second Breast Cancer Campaign Scientific Conference in London, Pamela Goldberg outlined how earlier diagnosis, new treatments, and increased awareness of symptoms has resulted in breast cancer moving towards becoming a chronic but controllable condition.

“The picture is completely different for women today than in the 70’s”, Pamela Goldberg told a conference of around 300 delegates today.

“Thirty years ago only half of women with breast cancer survived for more than five years. Today that figure is around 80 per cent.

“However, some of these treatments like radiotherapy and chemotherapy have toxic and debilitating side effects which have a profound impact on their quality of life, every single day. This may partly explain why breast cancer still remains the biggest health fear for women.”

Fatigue, body image and early menopause leading to childlessness are just some of the problems faced by breast cancer survivors that can have a real impact on their psychological well-being. In some cases fatigue is so severe that giving up work can seem the only option, according to the charity.

Carefully targeted research will play an important role in improving quality of life and problems faced by women after breast cancer. Key research gaps and priorities for the greatest potential impact on patients have already been identified and projects to fill the gaps are being funded by Breast Cancer Campaign.

Mr Ian Pearson, Minister of State for Science and Innovation opened the Conference, saying, “Breast Cancer Campaign is to be congratulated on funding cutting edge research which has already made a significant impact on those affected by breast cancer. The challenge now is to continue to make progress, not only in increasing survival rates but also by improving the quality of life for the 44,000 women diagnosed with breast cancer every year.

“The Government is absolutely committed to supporting the work of scientists, like those funded by Breast Cancer Campaign, in their quest for excellence, which will ultimately lead to greater patient benefit.”

Pamela Goldberg continued, “The search for more effective and targeted therapies is constant but breast cancer research encompasses so much more than new treatments. While our mission is to beat breast cancer, we also aim to better understand the impact that breast cancer has on people’s lives and how best to support them.

“If we co-ordinate our resources to target the priorities in breast cancer research, we can ensure an environment of scientific excellence with the best possible chance of change. It is now the responsibility of breast cancer researchers, not just in the UK but around the world, to fill the gaps we know exist. The future of medical research is in their hands along with our lives.”

Keynote presentations were given by Dr Dennis Slamon, University of California, Professor Ashok Venkitaraman, University of Cambridge

and Dr Penelope Hopwood, University of Manchester with abstracts from some of the country's leading breast cancer scientists including Dr Jo Morris and Dr John Maher, King's College, London.

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