

More people surviving cancer in Northern Ireland

February 28 2012

Despite the rising incidence of cancer in Northern Ireland, the number of people surviving the disease in the country is increasing significantly year on year.

Each year there are between 50-60 men and women who survive the deadly effects of cancer who previously would have died.

The [survival rates](#) in Northern Ireland for cancers including breast and colorectal are among the best in the UK, and its patients are benefiting from improved treatment outcomes by up to four per cent better than those for England and Wales.

The figures have been revealed as Queen's University Belfast accepted a Diamond Jubilee Queen's Anniversary Prize at Buckingham Palace, in recognition of its leadership of the Northern Ireland Comprehensive Cancer Services (CCS) programme.

The CCS programme has been credited with driving forward the improvements in [cancer survival](#) in Northern Ireland. It is a collaboration led by Queen's University in partnership with the Department of Health and the five Northern Ireland Health Trusts with support from the medical research industry.

The programme has resulted in the reorganisation of cancer services across Northern Ireland, and investment of more than £200 million in infrastructure and personnel for treatment and research by the University

and the health service.

The CCS programme was also recently described by the distinguished medical journal, *The Oncologist*, as 'life-extending research that is emblematic of the way cancer medicine should be conducted in the 21st century.'

Accepting the prize, Professor Patrick Johnston, Dean of the School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences, said: "Despite the rising incidence rates of cancer, between 1993 and 2009, the number of men dying from cancer has gone down by 1.3 per cent and the number of women by 0.9 per cent. Some of our survivors are currently alive and well a significant number of years after the kind of cancer that not so long ago would have taken them from us.

"Cancer no longer needs to be seen as an inevitable death sentence. In many instances it can now be viewed instead as a chronic disease."

He added: "This award underpins our reputation as a global centre of excellence for cancer care. To receive it is a singular honour, not just for Queen's but for the whole of Northern Ireland and in particular all the fundraisers, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the five Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trusts and our supporters from the national and international medical research industry.

"Our strength lies in a multidisciplinary approach – teams of scientists and clinicians working together across academic and NHS boundaries on behalf of cancer patients and their families."

Queen's Vice Chancellor Professor Sir Peter Gregson said: "Queen's is committed to high quality translational research. We are seeing innovations which are providing life-saving and life-enhancing results, reflecting our drive to become a global force in the fight against cancer."

The pillars of the CCS programme are the Clinical Cancer Centre at Belfast City Hospital, the Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology, the Cancer Research Programme at Queen's and the University's [Northern Ireland Cancer Registry](#) which provides vital information about research and outcomes.

Provided by Queen's University Belfast

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