

Press release
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SOUTHALL MP CALLS ON COMMUNITY LEADERS TO HELP RAISE AWARENESS OF BOWEL CANCER

On Monday 11 July, MP for Ealing Southall, Virendra Sharma, hosted a meeting to raise awareness of bowel cancer, the UK's second biggest cancer killerⁱ, amongst members of the Southall community.

The event, which took place at the Dominion Centre in Southall, aimed to raise awareness of bowel cancer symptoms and screening amongst key community and faith leaders from the local area. The meeting, which was organised by the national charity Beating Bowel Cancer as part of Ethnic Minorities Cancer Awareness Week (11-17 July), was attended by the Mayor of Ealing, Councillor John Gallagher, and the Deputy Mayor Councillor Mohammed Aslam.

Virendra Sharma MP said, *"I am delighted to be hosting this important event for Beating Bowel Cancer. It is excellent to see so many key members of the Southall community coming together to tackle this serious issue, which claims 45 lives in Ealing every year."*ⁱⁱ

"This meeting will be the first step in working together with Beating Bowel Cancer to raise awareness of bowel cancer symptoms and screening throughout all communities in Southall. I look forward to working together to make potentially lifesaving changes for the people of Southall."

In the Southall area the uptake of bowel cancer screening is low at just 37%, compared to the national average of 55%.ⁱⁱⁱ Furthermore, studies show that members of the South Asian community are half as likely to accept an invitation to be screened for bowel cancer as members of the non-Asian community.^{iv}

Beating Bowel Cancer's event addressed the cultural barriers that prevent members of the South Asian community from being aware of the signs and symptoms of bowel cancer and participating in the national screening programme.

A select group of community and faith leaders and leading local healthcare professionals attended to discuss ways in which they can work together with the charity to help raise awareness of bowel cancer symptoms and screening amongst the local population.

Mark Flanagan, Chief Executive of Beating Bowel Cancer says, *"We are very grateful to Virendra Sharma MP in helping us to raise awareness of bowel cancer amongst the wide range of communities in Southall."*

"Bowel cancer can affect anyone. But the good news is, if diagnosed early bowel cancer can be cured. Therefore it is essential that everyone is aware of the signs and symptoms of the disease, and that all those invited to take part in screening do so – it could save your life."

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Media inquiries

For further information please contact Kate Philipson, PR Manager on:
kate.philipson@beatingbowelcancer.org / 020 8973 0008

Notes to editors:

Beating Bowel Cancer is a national charity for bowel cancer patients, working to raise awareness of symptoms, promote early diagnosis and encourage open access to treatment choice for those affected by bowel cancer. Through our work we aim to save lives from this common cancer. For more information visit www.beatingbowelcancer.org.

Ethnic Minority Cancer Awareness Week (EMCAW) is one week each year when we can all come together to raise awareness of cancer within ethnic minority communities in Britain. EMCAW is organised by an alliance of charities working with and within communities to raise awareness of cancer. This year EMCAW is between 11-17 July. For more information visit www.emcaw.co.uk

ⁱ Cancer Research UK, Bowel Cancer – UK incidence statistics. Webpage: <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/types/bowel/incidence/index.htm>.

ⁱⁱ Cancer e-Atlas - Local Authority View. Webpage: http://www.apho.org.uk/addons/_49906/atlas.html

ⁱⁱⁱ Department of Health data on bowel cancer screening. December 2010

^{iv} Szczepura A. et al. Breast and bowel cancer screening uptake patterns over 15 years for UK south Asian ethnic minority populations, corrected for differences in socio-demographic characteristics. BMC Public Health 2008, 8:346doi:10.1186/1471-2458-8-346