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Victory for bowel cancer patient as West Kent PCT U-turns on treatment decision

Sheila Norrington, one of Beating Bowel Cancer's Patient Voices, whose moving story was recently featured on ITN News and in the Sunday Times, will now receive vital bowel cancer treatment on the NHS after West Kent PCT reversed their decision not to treat her.

Beating Bowel Cancer welcomed the decision by West Kent PCT to pay for Mrs Norrington to receive Erbitux (cetuximab) - a non NICE-approved bowel cancer drug.

Hilary Whittaker, Chief Executive of Beating Bowel Cancer said, "Whilst we are absolutely delighted with this U-turn by West Kent PCT, Sheila should not have had to go through the trauma and stress of fighting for access to Erbitux, a drug that is routinely available to patients with advanced bowel cancer in most other EU countries. Sheila was recommended for this treatment back in March 2008. At this stage, every day lost in appealing for a drug counts. Patients such as Sheila simply do not have that time to waste."

"It is a scandal that the vast majority of bowel cancer patients in the UK are denied this vital licensed drug which can actually reduce the size of a tumour, giving patients more time and improved quality of life. The fate of patients is decided by each individual PCT and who they deem to be an 'exceptional case', leading to very different outcomes across the country - a postcode lottery of treatment. We strongly urge NICE to reconsider its decision and make Erbitux and Avastin routinely available on the NHS to appropriate patients."

ENDS

For further details, please contact Munira Wilson, Public Relations & Public Affairs Manager on 020 8892 0171 or 07904 516402 or email munira@beatingbowelcancer.org.

KEY FACTS ABOUT BOWEL CANCER¹

- Bowel cancer is a disease of the large bowel (colon) or rectum. It is also sometimes called colorectal or colon cancer

- It is the **second largest cause of cancer deaths** in the UK
- It is the **third most common cancer** in the UK after breast and lung cancers
- Of the **100 new cases** of bowel cancer diagnosed every day, almost **50 people die** from the disease
- Every seven days bowel cancer claims 322 lives – that is like a **DC-10 passenger aircraft crashing every week**

BOWEL CANCER TREATMENTS LICENSED IN ENGLAND AND WALESⁱⁱ

Treatment Name	Treatment Stage	NICE-Approved *
5-FU	1 st line treatment for Bowel Cancer	Approved
Oxaliplatin (Eloxatin®)	Adjuvant treatment of stage III colon cancer after complete resection of primary tumour and treatment of metastatic colorectal cancer	Approved
Capecitabine (Xeloda®)	Adjuvant treatment of stage III colon cancer and 1 st line treatment of metastatic bowel cancer	Approved
Tegafur-uracil (Uftoral®)	1 st line chemotherapy treatment of metastatic colorectal cancer in combination with calcium folinate	Approved
Irinotecan (Campto®)	1 st and 2 nd line treatment of advanced colorectal cancer	Approved
Bevacizumab (Avastin®)	1 st line treatment of metastatic bowel cancer in combination with intravenous 5-FU/folinic acid with or without irinotecan	Not approved
Cetuximab (Erbix®)	Treatment for Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor (EGFR)-expressing metastatic bowel cancer that is no longer responding to an irinotecan-containing therapy	Not approved

ⁱ Cancer Research UK: <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/types/bowel/incidence/> and <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/types/bowel/survival/?a=5441>

ⁱⁱ Beating Bowel Cancer, 'Treating Bowel Cancer: Your Pathway'