

February 2014

Dear Practice Manager

INFORMATION FOR ALL GPs

Cholangiocarcinoma Awareness Month, February 2014

I am sending you this letter as a person whose life has been directly affected by cholangiocarcinoma. I am a supporter of AMMF, the UK's only cholangiocarcinoma charity, whose mission is to raise the awareness of this devastating disease, to provide information to those who need it and to encourage and support research.

This year the focus is on GP awareness. Are you aware of the facts of cholangiocarcinoma?

- It is the second most common liver cancer in the world
- It is the cause of approximately 1,800 deaths* each year in the UK alone
- Only 5% of patients will survive one year from diagnosis
- The incidence is increasing, and we don't know why
- Most patients are diagnosed too late for surgery which, currently, is the only potentially curative treatment

Cholangiocarcinoma starts in the bile ducts, but the symptoms can be vague and insidious – in fact, the early ones may only be slightly abnormal liver function tests. Commonest symptoms are due to blocking of the flow of bile – jaundice, dark urine, pale stools, a pain under the right ribs and sometimes itching. There may also be unexplained weight loss, general malaise and fatigue. Whilst several of these symptoms can be non-specific and could be caused by benign conditions, they do require urgent assessment because a missed diagnosis of cholangiocarcinoma could mean the patient then loses the window of opportunity for surgery with dire consequences...

We need your help. Please, if a patient presents with the symptoms mentioned above, be aware that these could be attributable to cholangiocarcinoma. Published statistics show that this is a disease of the over 60s, but it seems that many younger people are now being affected. Time is of the essence in achieving a diagnosis so that the patient has the best possible chance of life saving surgery.

For more information about cholangiocarcinoma, please visit the AMMF website:

www.ammf.org.uk

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Sign here

Name and address of sender for further contact:

**Figure from Cancer Research UK 2009*