

Wales Health Select Committee – Government response to ‘Unheard: women’s journey through Gynaecological cancer’.

Target Ovarian Cancer were grateful to have the opportunity to contribute to the committee’s report on gynaecological cancer in Wales. As well as written evidence, we attended an evidence session in person and asked some of our supporters to share their experience of being diagnosed with ovarian cancer to assist with the inquiry.

We supported many of the recommendations put forward by the Health Select Committee in the report and have been pleased to see some of these taken forward in the Government’s response.

Cervical Screening messaging

In particular recommendation 11, asking the Government to consider ways we can ensure information provided at cervical screening appointments makes clear that such screening does not test or screen for other gynaecological cancers and includes information around symptoms of other gynaecological cancers. Research carried out by Target Ovarian Cancer found that 42 per cent of women in Wales wrongly believe cervical screening will detect ovarian cancer.

We’re delighted that Government have accepted this recommendation and will be working with Public Health Wales to look at how this information is provided. This will play a key role in improving awareness and understanding of ovarian cancer.

Awareness

We were also pleased to see recommendation 12 accepted in part, recognising the need to raise awareness of gynaecological cancers through symptom awareness campaigns. Whilst we understand that due to financial pressures a government funded symptoms awareness campaign is not possible, we are pleased to see the Government commit that when finances allow, they will consider how best to target awareness campaigns.

Symptom awareness is key to early diagnosis, and without a viable screening programme we must ensure that everyone is aware of the symptoms, we hope this is a recommendation the Government will keep under review.

Specific data

We were disappointed to see the Government reject recommendation 15, calling for a review of incidence, trends and high-risk populations in relation to emergency presentations with gynaecological cancer, broken down by each cancer.

To understand the landscape of ovarian cancer and its impact on women in Wales we must see specific data on this type of cancer.

Overall, the report published is encouraging, and we are pleased to see a number of recommendations accepted by the Government. However, while the response is

encouraging, we hoped for more recommendations to be made regarding disaggregated data on ovarian cancer and increasing support for the workforce and individuals.

We will continue to work with the Health Select Committee and the Welsh government to ensure the experiences of women with ovarian cancer are heard, improved and that they are never ignored.