



PRESS RELEASE – 22.06.10

£500,000 Grant Paves the Way for a Brain Tumour Research Centre of Excellence at the University of Portsmouth

Childhood brain tumour research charities Ali's Dream and Charlie's Challenge, pave the way for the establishment of a brain tumour research Centre of Excellence at the University of Portsmouth. Both members of the Brain Tumour Research group of charities have committed £400,000 between them and this grant will be backed by a further commitment of £100,000 from the umbrella charity. These grants will ensure that the long-term aim of the University of Portsmouth to find a solution to brain tumours is maintained and secured.

Sue Farrington Smith, Director of Brain Tumour Research said:

'No-one, unless they're personally affected, realises that:

- 16,000 people each year are diagnosed with a brain tumour in the UK
- Brain tumours kill more children and people under 40 than leukaemia or any other cancer
- 20% of all cancers now spread to the brain
- Brain tumour research receives less than 1% (0.7%) of national cancer research spending in the UK

'To this end we would like to see a commitment by the newly-elected Government to help establish a working group to review how UK cancer research funding is allocated across different disease types.'

Julie Phelan, who set up the charity Ali's Dream along with family and friends, following the loss of her daughter, Alison on June 7th 2001, three weeks before her eighth birthday, said:

'The last nine years have been a dreadful, painful journey. When Ali was diagnosed there was no information to guide us on where to turn for help in order to gain a better understanding of what to do next. After Ali died we were left with no support. We felt so passionate about trying to ease the pain for others suffering in this way. This is why we set up Ali's Dream.

It was so hard at the time that Ali was diagnosed and the only treatment we were offered was radiotherapy. The radiotherapy treatment went better than we thought, so we kept positive. This bought us valuable time as a family.

Along our journey we always thought “there is always hope”, we kept believing, and our hope kept us going. Professor Geoff Pilkington, a brain tumour scientist, was always on the end of the phone to offer his advice and support. He would say “Never say never!”

When Ali was taken from us we were determined to help prevent our pain from happening to other families. We were driven to make a difference. So we set up Ali’s Dream and were overwhelmed by the support and encouragement by those around us and that have joined us along the way. We never imagined the charity would be the success it is today.

People with brain tumours rarely survive. The brain tumour world is let down as it is a relatively rare cancer, however the number of young adults and children that die is scary compared with other cancers.

I am so proud of all the people who have helped us achieve this, we have fantastic people on board and now we want to do anything that we can to bring it to the forefront.

Sadly our Ali’s dream of living did not come true. As a family our determination is to see our Alison’s Dream realised, through the cure of other children who are suffering as she did from this dreadful illness. We need Brain tumours to be taken seriously and to have the same voice as the bigger cancer related charities. Brain tumours need a voice.

Joining together with fellow brain tumour charities to establish a brain tumour research ‘Centre of Excellence’ at the University of Portsmouth is a great way forward.’

Geoff Pilkington, Professor of Neuro-oncology at the University of Portsmouth who will head up the Centre of Excellence said: “Currently a disproportionate amount of UK research funding is channelled into leukaemia and the more pervasive cancers such as breast and prostate. We need to significantly increase the level of funding that goes into brain tumour research and establish regional centres of excellence dedicated to laboratory-based brain tumour research.

Continuity of research programmes is essential if we are to turn round the fortunes of those diagnosed with a brain tumour. My own research and the ironic death of my own mother from a glioma some 8 years into my career have enabled me to see both how difficult these tumours are to investigate and the devastation they bring to patients, their families and friends. I strongly believe, however, the work my colleagues and I are ‘doing in the test tube’ will eventually result in benefits for patients, These ‘real’ people who are desperate for a cure provide a firm focus for our sustained research efforts.

I am delighted that Ali’s Dream, Charlie’s Challenge and Brain Tumour Research are providing us with the seed funding we so desperately need to secure the critical biological knowledge which will under-pin the development of successful innovative therapeutic approaches for all forms of brain tumours and affecting any age group’.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS:

Stories attached – Ali's Dream and Charlie's Challenge

Brain Tumour Research comprises the following 16 member charities who have united together: Ali's Dream, Andrea's Gift, Anna's Hope, Astro Fund, Brain and Spine Foundation, Braintrust, Brain Tumour Action, Brain Tumour Research Campaign, Brainwaves, Charlie's Challenge, Children's Brain Tumour Research Centre, Ellie Savage Memorial Trust, Hammer Out, Levi's Star, The Diana Ford Trust and Thorne Mason Trust.

In 2009 these charities jointly raised over £1.5 million with funds raised being allocated to provide support and research at existing UK centres, like the University of Portsmouth, where brain tumour research is already being carried out.