INVEST IN A CURE

Treatments for brain tumour patients lag seriously behind other cancers.

The national investment in brain tumour research needs to increase to £30-£35 million each year over the course of the next parliament.

We call on the UK Government to work with Brain Tumour Research and its partner organisations to:

1. Shine a spotlight on research funding for brain tumours
2. Incentivise treatment. Prioritise brain tumour patients
3. Facilitate innovation. Ring-fence funds for brain tumour research

Brain tumours kill more children and adults under the age of 40 than any other cancer.
Brain tumours kill more children and adults under the age of 40 than any other cancer¹... yet just 1% of the national spend on cancer research is allocated to this devastating disease².

We are striving to fund a network of seven dedicated research centres whilst challenging the Government and larger cancer charities to invest more in brain tumour research.

Help us fund the fight. Together we will find a cure.

We are calling for the national investment in brain tumour research to be increased to £30-£35 million per annum.

The Government and larger cancer charities should invest more in brain tumour research. At the current rate of spend, it could take 100 years for brain cancer to catch up with developments in other diseases and find a cure.

In July 2009 Brain Tumour Research published our first revelatory report. The Inequality of Funding. The first of its kind it revealed some of the hard facts surrounding brain tumours.

In March 2013, in partnership with New Philanthropy Capital we developed Brain Tumour Research — Funding Flows, revealing new insights into the inequality and chronic lack of funding coupled with an alarming increase in incidence and mortality rates.

In July 2013, we published a ground-breaking report on the state of Research Funding for Brain Tumours. This remains the most comprehensive analysis of its type ever published.

The current state of the research field is unclear. Brain Tumour Research held conversations with members of the National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) during 2013 and 2014 to shed some light into how research money is awarded and reported the results in our Report Update on National Research Funding – July 2014.

1. SHINE A SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH FUNDING FOR BRAIN TUMOURS

Researchers, institutions and the Government are unable to present in one place exactly what research is being funded and the results that are being achieved. The Medical Research Council (MRC) priorities ‘living a long and healthy life’. It is difficult to assess whether research grants and awards reflect these priorities. The NCRI gives an indication of some of the money spent on research, yet the data collected is from just 22 institutions nationally (seven of which are government funded bodies), giving an unclear picture.

We are calling for the Government to create a national register of all site specific cancer research to track all research work, grants and results.

We are calling for the Government’s cancer research fund to prioritise reducing deaths under 75.

The NHS National Outcomes Framework prioritises improving outcomes for cancer patients and reducing deaths among the under 75s. The fight against brain tumours is part of the solution to this challenge.
2 INCENTIVISE TREATMENT

The Cancer Drugs Fund, established in April 2011, allows patients access to treatments that do not have a National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) Technology Appraisal and often funds treatments for rarer cancers. This fund has benefited around 35,000 cancer patients since 2010. The current fund awards grants based on (1) progression free survival (2) overall survival (3) quality of life (4) toxicity (5) unmet need (6) cost.

We are calling for an additional criterion which prioritises treatments for those cancers affecting younger patients.

Brain tumours disproportionately affect young people. They are responsible for over 20 years of life lost – more lethal than any other cancer and less than 20% of those diagnosed survive beyond five years. Crucial research is currently prohibited by the lack of recognition of the importance of prioritising research and development which focuses on this patient group. The addition of this criterion would incentivise commercial organisations to invest in the crucial research needed to find a cure for this deadly disease.

Developing new drugs can take years. Around 16,000 people a year are diagnosed with a primary or secondary brain tumour. Up to 40% of cancers spread to the brain and some 3,600 people a year die from primary brain tumours. With every delay to drug development lives are being lost.

We are calling for greater repurposing of drugs to ensure vital research is not wasted and can be used to the benefit of all patients.

Drugs repurposing reduces the timeframe and decreases the cost of lifesaving drug development and is a crucial method of saving lives. This practice does not happen enough and should be encouraged by the Government and the NHS.

3 FACILITATE INNOVATION

Grant applications to existing research funding bodies require evidence of previous research (pilot work as well as published results). Applications must be deemed “low risk” in nature and as having a high likelihood of success before they are awarded. This means that there has to be a pre-existing bank of evidence. Novel research, particularly relating to brain tumours, suffers as a consequence of lack of existing research. This is a self-perpetuating cycle and one that must change.

We are calling on the Government to ring-fence an Innovation Fund from existing research budgets to kick-start the next generation of ground-breaking and lifesaving discoveries.

This ring-fenced Fund should be set aside for areas of new research on rarer cancers and diseases with a lower threshold for grants to be awarded in new projects, or in existing schemes such as the 100,000 Genomes Project. This stimulus will create a new wave of research that previously would have been unable to take place, widening our knowledge of cancer and creating the treatments we need.

We are calling on the Government to devote an absolute amount to brain tumour research.

Brain tumours represent 1% of cancers diagnosed, yet 3% of cancer deaths. Within this Fund a consistent or growing absolute figure should be devoted by the Government to brain cancer research.

It is time brain tumour research received its fair share.
REFERENCES:


