

MERSEYSIDE ASBESTOS VICTIMS SUPPORT GROUP

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PRESS RELEASE NO EMBARGO TIME

Asbestos victims walk to demand funds for research.

The Family and friends of Mr. Francis Innelli who was diagnosed with mesothelioma, a cancer of the lining of the lung caused by asbestos, will be doing a sponsored walk from the Pier Head Liverpool to Southport on Saturday 20 June to raise funds for the Merseyside Asbestos Victims Support Group (MAVS). Dave Innelli, Mr. Innell's son has organised the walk to raise awareness of the disease.

Asbestos related deaths are predicted to rise to about 2,200 in the next 5-10 years peaking at 2,500 per year in about 2015 and remain above 1,500 till 2025. Asbestos-related cancers are predicted to total about 5,000 per year by 2015 including at least one asbestos related lung cancer per mesothelioma.

Dave Innelli said "We all appreciate the help and support that asbestos victims are given however it cannot compensate for the loss of someone due to the negligence of employers who knew the risks of asbestos and didn't tell their workers and failed to provide them with the most basic of protective equipment" He added "My father worked all his life making profits for others only to be paid with this terrible man made disease; I hope this first of our fundraising events like this will convince the government to fund research into finding a cure for mesothelioma which is the least researched of the top 20 cancers"

John Flanagan, Training & Information Officer for MAVS said "Victims support Groups from all over the UK handed in a 22,000 signature petition to Number 10 on 20 May calling for funding to find a cure for mesothelioma and we await a response to that petition, he added "The government and the insurance industry would save millions of pounds in compensation and costs to the NHS if they both fully funded this vital research which has the potential of saving thousands of lives"

"Funding at present is woefully inadequate - it's among the worst researched fields in cancer research," said John Edwards, consultant thoracic surgeon and chair of the British Mesothelioma Interest Group.

The walk will start at 8.00am at the Pier Head and will finish at Duke Street, Southport.

EDITORS NOTES.

Contact John Flanagan on 0151 236 1895 or 0151 236 2692 or mobile 0779 101 9641.

Mr. Innelli, his son, friends and group representatives will be available for interview and photograph at the start of the walk at 8.00am, Pier Head, Liverpool.

The petition to Number 10 reads.

"We, the undersigned, believe that properly funded research is absolutely vital if advances are to be made in the diagnosis and treatment of mesothelioma and we call on the UK Government to provide dedicated funds for mesothelioma research in a National Centre for Asbestos-Related Disease."

PRESS RELEASE ISSUED FOR PETITION PRESENTATION.

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[Printable version](#)

Cash demand for asbestos cancer

Mesothelioma kills around 2,000 people a year

Campaigners and MPs are demanding the government stump up millions of pounds to rectify the "woefully inadequate" funding of asbestos cancer research.

More than 20,000 people have signed a petition urging the creation of a specialist research centre.

Activists argue mesothelioma - caused by asbestos exposure - is the least researched of the UK's top 20 cancers.

It mainly affects those who worked with the heatproof material, which was used widely in construction until the 1980s.

Mesothelioma is an invariably fatal tumour found in the surface of the lung. While relatively rare, it is very difficult to treat because of its location, and does not seem to respond well to chemotherapy.

While the disease has been found in people with no history of exposure to asbestos, inhaling the dust released by the mineral when it is broken up is known to be a key risk factor. As such, it has particularly affected tradesmen such as joiners, plumbers and electricians.

Safety regulations introduced in the 1970s reduced exposure, but brown asbestos was still used in the 1980s.

Because it can take many decades for the disease to develop, experts expect the number of cases to peak at around 2,200 by 2013.

Teaching unions are also campaigning for asbestos to be removed from all schools. Health and Safety Executive figures show that 228 teachers died from asbestos-related diseases between 1991 and 2005.

Virtual research

Campaigners from various asbestos disease support groups, doctors and several MPs are to present the petition to Downing Street asking for funding to establish the National Centre for Asbestos Related Disease.

Society has a moral obligation to stand by those who have lost their health and their lives in creating this country's wealth

Tony Whitston

Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum UK

This would be a "virtual" centre bringing together research teams from across the UK and Ireland under the same leadership. The government is asked to provide £5m to support the research, with a further £5m coming from other sources.

"Funding at present is woefully inadequate - it's among the worst resourced fields in cancer research," said John Edwards, consultant thoracic surgeon and chair of the British Mesothelioma Interest Group.

"We need a radically different approach. We have to accept that we are seeing an explosion in cases and that there's no guarantee they will suddenly start to tail off. All the main parties accept this is a disease we have to confront. At the end of the day £5m is really not a lot of money for something so urgent."

Tony Whitston, head of the Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum UK, noted that in the US "mesothelioma has been given research priority to bid for funding from the \$50m [£32m] Department of Defense Medical Research budget, in recognition of the thousands of veterans exposed to asbestos in service and in naval shipyards.

"In Australia, the government has given \$6m [£3m] to fund a research centre. Society has a moral obligation to stand by those who have lost their health and their lives in creating this country's wealth."

A Department of Health spokesperson said: "A national Lung Cancer and Mesothelioma Advisory Group (LCAMAG), chaired by the National Cancer Director, Professor Mike Richards was set up to work closely with the voluntary sector and patient and professional groups in order to support the development and delivery of high quality service for lung cancer and mesothelioma patients."

"We welcome ideas that can help stimulate more high quality research proposals. Our ongoing Cancer Reform Strategy highlights our commitment to improving all cancer patient care and services."