



Pat Hanlon, kidney cancer survivor

# 'Blood in Pee': How pharmacy teams can support the new national campaign

**The NHS is launching a campaign to raise awareness of blood in urine as a symptom of bladder and kidney cancers this autumn – we need your support to make it a success.**

## **What is *Be Clear on Cancer*?**

*Be Clear on Cancer* aims to improve early diagnosis of cancer by raising awareness of symptoms and encouraging more people to see their GP earlier.

## **What is the main message of the new campaign?**

If you notice blood in your pee, even if it's 'just the once', tell your doctor.

## **What activities will be taking place and when?**

Adverts will appear on national TV, radio and in the press from 15 October to 20 November 2013. There will be events in public places, like shopping centres; a direct mail letter and leaflet will also be sent to people in key areas across England.

## **Who is the 'Blood in Pee' campaign aimed at?**

Men and women from lower socioeconomic groups **over the age of 50**, and the people who influence them, such as friends and family.

## **Why focus on 'blood in pee'?**

Visible blood in urine is a key symptom in over 80% of bladder cancers and over half of kidney cancers. But when asked to name cancer signs and symptoms, only 33% of people mention unexplained bleeding.

*Be Clear on Cancer* campaigns aim to use everyday language to help people feel more comfortable when discussing symptoms with their GP. During testing, the word 'pee' was universally accepted.

## **Are there other symptoms of bladder and kidney cancer?**

Blood in urine (haematuria) is the most common symptom, but there are others. A full list of bladder and kidney cancer signs and symptoms is available on [NHS Choices](#).

## **How can pharmacy teams support this national campaign?**

Pharmacies are often the first port of call for people suffering with urinary symptoms – many find it easier to discuss them or their worries in the informal pharmacy setting.

If a customer mentions that they have noticed blood in their urine, whether it's just the once, or they frequently buy over the counter (OTC) medicines to treat Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs), urge them to visit their doctor. GPs will be following NICE guidelines, which state that those with painless blood in urine, those aged 40 and over with recurrent or persistent UTIs associated with blood in urine, or those with blood in urine with no identifiable infection should be urgently referred.

## **Opening cancer conversations with customers can be difficult. Do you have any tips?**

A Cancer Research UK nurse, who specialises in communicating about cancer, advises:

'It is important for pharmacists and their teams to feel confident and to try and make cancer a normal part of conversation. Practise and find phrases that you are comfortable with. For example if you wanted to mention cancer as part of a medicine-use review, talking about it in the same breath as heart disease, stroke and diabetes may make it easier. If you are worried about someone who has repeatedly bought an OTC medicine for a suspected cancer symptom, you could ask: "What does the doctor say about that?" or "Do you think it might be a good idea to discuss your symptoms with your GP?"' Pharmacy staff who feel uncomfortable talking about cancer should seek the advice of a pharmacist.

**'Lots of people don't realise that blood in pee could be a symptom of cancer, even if it only happens once. The campaign has a really clear message that pharmacy teams are in an ideal position to actively reinforce. We need to reassure our customers and patients that they won't be wasting their GP's time – whether it's a one-off or something that keeps happening, and encourage them to overcome any fears or worries they may have. It's vital they get themselves checked out.'**

Ann Gunning, MRPharmS

**'When I told my wife I'd noticed blood in my pee, she said I should see my doctor as soon as possible. I wasn't sure, as it wasn't painful, but I'm glad I listened to her.'**

Pat Hanlon, aged 70, kidney cancer survivor

### **Key facts about bladder and kidney cancer**

- If kidney and bladder cancers are diagnosed at the earliest stage, one-year survival is as high as 92–97%. At a late stage, it drops to just 25–34%
- Every year, around 16,600 people in England are diagnosed with bladder or kidney cancer. Around 7,500 will die from them
- It is estimated that around 1,000 deaths from bladder and kidney cancers could be avoided each year if survival rates matched the best in Europe

### **Who is most at risk of bladder and kidney cancers?**

These cancers affect both men and women, and are more common in older age, with around 95% of cases diagnosed in those aged 50 and over. Smoking is the most important cause of both bladder and kidney cancers. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of kidney cancer; while having worked in certain manufacturing jobs that involved the use of dyes, diesel or some other chemicals increases the risk of bladder cancer. People on kidney dialysis and those with a family history of bladder or kidney cancer are also at higher risk.

### **Is there any evidence that the 'Blood in Pee' campaign will work?**

Three local pilots in 2012 have shown encouraging results:

- 23% increase in 2 Week Wait (2WW) referrals for suspected urological cancer in the pilot area\*
- Total cystoscopy figures for 18 PCTs covered by the local pilots indicate a 5.9% increase compared with the same months in 2011
- 5.3% increase in the number of bladder or kidney cancers diagnosed following a 2WW urgent referral for suspected urological cancer within the pilot area

A regional pilot campaign that ran from January to March 2013 has also been positive:

- The percentage of respondents saying they would see the GP the same day if they noticed any changes to pee or bladder habits significantly increased from 18% to 27%; this was particularly the case for men, where the increase was from 21% to 32%
- Knowledge of blood in urine as a definite warning sign of kidney/bladder cancer significantly increased amongst the target audience from 41% to 65%; this increase was seen in both men and women
- 28% increase in 2WW referrals for suspected urological cancer\*

\*Pathway covers several urological cancer types in addition to kidney and bladder

### **How are GPs and hospitals preparing for the national 'Blood in Pee' campaign?**

NHS Improving Quality will work with Strategic Clinical Networks to help ensure the NHS is prepared for the campaign. There are also additional briefing sheets to support GPs and to help hospital providers plan for expected increases in referrals and diagnostic tests.

### **Three things you can do**

**1 Make it part of your day.** During your regular consultations, such as medicine-use reviews, be mindful that the people you are talking to may have seen the campaign. It may prompt people who have previously ignored symptoms or discounted them as a one-off to do something – they may come to your pharmacy looking for OTC medicines or advice.

**2 Give permission.** People can delay going to see their GP and often seek permission to make an appointment. If customers/patients have noticed blood in their urine, whether it's just the once or as part of a recurring UTI, urge them to visit their GP. If you feel comfortable, tell the customer to mention that their pharmacist sent them. It may be the push they need to get themselves checked out.

**3 Promote the campaign.** Put up posters in your pharmacy and have some 'Blood in Pee' leaflets readily available for customers. You can order these free of charge at [orderline.dh.gov.uk](http://orderline.dh.gov.uk) or by ringing 0300 123 1002. Finally, chat to your friends, family, customers and colleagues about *Be Clear on Cancer*. We need to talk about cancer and make it a less taboo topic.

### **Find out more**

- Visit [naedi.org/beclearoncancer/bloodinpee](http://naedi.org/beclearoncancer/bloodinpee) for more information for health professionals
- The public-facing website for the new national *Be Clear on Cancer* campaign is [nhs.uk/bloodinpee](http://nhs.uk/bloodinpee)