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LUNG CANCER RATES 50 PER CENT HIGHER IN THE WEST OF SCOTLAND

PEOPLE living in the west of Scotland are 50 per cent more likely to be diagnosed with lung cancer than people living in the rest of the UK, according to a new report revealed at the National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Conference in Birmingham today (Tuesday).

The statistics, published by the National Cancer Intelligence Network (NCIN), also showed that, overall, people living in the west of Scotland were 15 per cent more likely to be diagnosed with lung cancer than people from the rest of Scotland.

Professor David Forman, information lead for the NCIN who is based at the University of Leeds, said: "Smoking rates are around five per cent higher in Scotland than the rest of the UK, and this significantly contributes to the higher rates of lung cancer – smoking is responsible for nearly nine in ten cases of lung cancer."

The figures also revealed that patients from the west of Scotland were 30 per cent more likely to die from lung cancer than those in the rest of Scotland, and that overall, the rate of people dying from lung cancer was 50 per cent higher than in the rest of the UK.

As some of the most deprived areas in the UK are in Glasgow, experts say higher levels of deprivation, resulting in a poorer lifestyle in the west of Scotland, are contributing to this gap in both lung cancer incidence and death rates in comparison with the rest of the UK.

Professor Forman continued: "We know that smoking rates are linked to deprivation – rates are around 10 per cent higher in working class communities."

The report by the NCIN compared cancer incidence and mortality rates across the UK broken down by cancer network*. The data were compiled this year and based on new cancer cases and deaths recorded in 2005 – before the smoking ban came into place in Scotland in 2006.

In 2005, 77 per 100,000 people living in the west of Scotland were diagnosed with lung cancer, compared with 55 per 100,000 in the north of Scotland and 64 in the south east of the country. Across the UK, 49 in every 100,000 people were diagnosed with the disease.

The report also revealed that the west of Scotland is the most affected area of the UK in terms of lung cancer incidence among both men and women. The rates of lung cancer among women in the west of Scotland now exceed those of men in some parts of the UK. For example, women were almost 50 per cent more likely to get lung cancer in the west of Scotland than men in Surrey, West Sussex and Hampshire.

Professor Jim Cassidy, based at Cancer Research UK's Beatson Institute, said: "Following the success of smokefree legislation, in May the Scottish Government launched their plan to further drive down smoking rates. Key measures included restricting the display of cigarettes at points of sale, taking action to reduce smuggled and counterfeit cigarettes and working with the rest of the UK to consider using plain packaging for cigarettes. These measures would particularly help reduce smoking uptake in young people. We strongly support the Government's commitment and look forward to real progress in these areas."

Professor Sir Alex Markham, chair of the NCIN, said: "Scotland has led the UK in protecting workers and the public from the dangers of secondhand smoke and has every right to be proud. But higher smoking rates in Scotland still account for much of the difference in cancer rates between England and Scotland.

"It's crucial that we collect and analyse data like this to pick up on variations in lung cancer across the country. This information can help target anti-smoking policies where it matters, and this is vitally important."

ENDS

For media enquiries please contact Rachel Gonzaga on 07918 695 599, or the London press office on 020 7061 8300, or the out-of-hours duty press officer on 07050 264059.

Notes to editors:

* There are 30 Networks in England, three in Scotland, 3 in Wales and one in Northern Ireland.

The West of Scotland Cancer Network covers Ayrshire and Arran, Forth Valley, Greater Glasgow & Clyde and Lanarkshire.

The North of Scotland Cancer Network incorporates Tayside, Highlands, Grampian, Western Isles, Orkney and NHS Shetland.

The South East of Scotland cancer network covers Borders, Dumfries & Galloway, Fife and Lothian.

About the National Cancer Intelligence Network (NCIN)

- The NCIN will coordinate the collection, analysis and publication of comparative national data on diagnosis, treatment and outcomes for types of cancer and types of patient
- As part of the National Cancer Research Institute, the NCIN aims to promote efficient and effective data collection at each stage of the cancer journey
- Patient care will be monitored by the NCIN through expert analyses of up-to-date statistics
- The NCIN will drive improvements in the standards of care and clinical outcomes through exploiting data
- The NCIN will support audit and research programmes by providing cancer information
- Visit www.ncin.org.uk for more information

About the NCRI Cancer Conference

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Conference is the UK's premier forum for disseminating advances across all aspects of cancer research.

About the NCRI

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) was established in April 2001. It is a UK-wide partnership between the government, charity and industry which promotes co-operation in cancer research among the 21 member organisations for the benefit of patients, the public and the scientific community. www.ncri.org.uk

NCRI members are: the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI); Association for International Cancer Research; Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council; Breakthrough Breast Cancer; Breast Cancer Campaign; Cancer Research UK; CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA, Department of Health; Economic and Social Research Council; Leukaemia Research; Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research;

Macmillan Cancer Support; Marie Curie Cancer Care; Medical Research Council; Northern Ireland Health and Social Care (Research & Development Office); Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation; Scottish Government Health Directorates (Chief Scientist Office); Tenovus; Welsh Assembly Government (Wales Office of Research and Development for Health & Social Care); The Wellcome Trust; and Yorkshire Cancer Research.