

Campaigners' joy after cancer drug's approval

A group of women from Deal who campaigned against the withdrawal of a breast cancer drug are celebrating news it will now be available on the NHS.

Kadcyla gives significant and precious extra time to women with incurable secondary breast cancer and is currently funded through the Cancer Drugs Fund (CDF).

Advisory body Nice had been reviewing drugs made available through the fund, and had rejected Kadcyla for NHS funded use because of its high £90,000 per patient per year price.

In a dramatic U-turn, a new agreement between NHS England, Nice and Roche pharmaceuticals was announced last Thursday, meaning the drug will now become routinely available on the NHS throughout England.

Chantele Rashbrook, 46, of Middle Deal Road, has secondary breast cancer and is being treated with Kadcyla every three weeks to reduce its size.

She, along with other women who attend her monthly support group, The BC Girls of Deal, had been fighting the proposals by attending committee meetings and debates with ministers, MPs and NHS representatives in The Commons, signing a petition and even appearing on BBC News.

The women also staged a Breast Cancer Now campaign in front of the Houses of Parliament in February and met with Deal and Dover MP Charlie Elphicke.

Mrs Rashbrook said: "This news is awesome.

"It just shows that someone was listening to all involved in the debate. It's an amazing drug and it's working for me so others should be allowed it.



Chantele Rashbrook with her Deal BC girls

MP DELIGHTED

Dover and Deal MP Charlie Elphicke has welcomed the approval of a life-extending cancer drug after lobbying the NHS over the issue.

He said: "I am delighted by the outcome and there is no doubt all the pressure we piled on made a great difference. So many people were involved in this campaign.

"Time is the most important thing we have. If treatments work and give us more of it, money should not be an obstacle."

"I'm now going into my third year on Kadcyla and it's reduced the tumour on my lung to pretty much nothing.

"A lot of women in our group could end up with secondary breast cancer. They would never have been given this chance without this decision. "We're over the moon with the outcome."

Mandee Castle, of the BC Girls of Deal, said: "I'm so proud to have been part of this campaign and of the BC Girls of Deal for getting behind it 100%.

"We all live with the fear of breast cancer recurring, but this decision will help to

move secondary breast cancer towards being a disease that can be managed and lived with, and not a death sentence.

"We all see Chantele living her life to all its fabulous, crazy fullness with minimal side effects. We want this to be the norm, not the exception.

"Approval of Kadcyla is a step in the right direction."

Kerry Rubins, an ambassador for Breast Cancer Now, has welcomed the news but says the fight for other drugs to be made available on the NHS goes on.

She said: "This is fabulous news. Huge congratulations to Breast Cancer Now and all supporters that took part in achieving this result but the time, money and effort that had to be spent on achieving this is staggering. Also particularly worrying is the news that Perjeta is under threat of being removed from NHS use.

"The thought that others may be denied access to this drug, which has had a remarkable effect in some cases, is unacceptable. We shouldn't have to fight to receive the best possible care."

■ On Saturday Chantele Rashbrook's Clifftop Challenge raised thousands of pounds for Breast Cancer Now. For the full story and pictures see pages 26-27

'SIGNS OF LIFE'

Baroness Delyth Morgan, chief executive at Breast Cancer Now, said: "This is exceptionally good news. We are delighted that tough negotiation and flexibility by NICE and NHS England, and the willingness of Roche to compromise on price, have ensured that thousands of women with incurable breast cancer will be given precious time to live.

"We want to congratulate and thank the hundreds of thousands of supporters across the country for their relentless campaigning to ensure this crucial lifeline drug is routinely available.

"This outcome also demonstrates vital signs of life for the drug appraisal system in this country.

"Today's decision bodes well for patients looking for reassurances that modern cancer treatments can get through to NHS patients more quickly and can bring transformational improvements in patient outcomes.

"However, this news comes at a time when there is a real possibility that Perjeta, the first-line treatment for this group of patients, could soon be removed from NHS use.

"Perjeta's benefits are extraordinary, offering nearly 16 additional months of life to women with incurable breast cancer, and it is imperative that a solution is found to save this drug, at a cost affordable to both the NHS and the taxpayer."

Improved minor injuries units will ease pressure on GPs

Deal and Dover's minor injuries units are to be enhanced to relieve pressure on GP surgeries and A&E departments.

The centres at Deal and Buckland hospitals will open for an extra two hours until 8pm under plans by the South Kent Coast CCG which provides NHS services for the area.

They will also have access to doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and mental health workers to provide same day care for minor illness and injuries under the same roof.

Two other "primary access hubs" situated in Folkestone, Hythe, Dover and Deal.

The CCG revealed 20 per cent of its doctors are set to retire in five years, placing mounting pressure on waiting lists.

The scheme will work alongside GP surgeries to provide care for some 200,000 patients.

A report published by the CCG this month explains: "This will benefit patients by offering longer appointments and continuity of care for frail, elderly and high-risk patients, to improve population health outcomes and prevent avoidable hospital admissions.

"Practice GPs will be freed up to take on more senior work and responsibility.

"Under-doctored areas will benefit from greater access to GP-led services.

"The model creates head space for GPs, leading to much better local care for long term conditions that is holistic and preventative."

The report outlines how the project should save money and take strain off overburdened Accident and Emergency.

It says: "The hub model offers good value for money

when compared to other services and for maximising value from existing services.

"For example, an appointment costs £14 per appointment compared to £57 in A&E.

"There is a real opportunity cost to prevent avoidable admissions through the development of holistic care for long term conditions."

With the services open from 8am-8pm seven days a week, it is estimated they will offer residents 174,000 extra appointments a year.

The centres will be at Folkestone's Royal Victoria Hospital, a "hub and spoke" model in Hythe and surrounding areas, Deal Hospital, and Buckland Hospital in Dover.

The CCG believes 58 per cent of minor illness appointments could be delivered via the new service.

Man suffers bonfire burns

A man, in his 20s, has suffered horrific injuries from a bonfire.

The victim sustained about 25% burns to his arms and legs in Gore Lane, Eastry, on Saturday.

A Kent Fire and Rescue Service spokesman said: "It's thought the man tried to start a bonfire using flammable liquids."

Crews were called out at 1.45pm.

The man was flown to hospital.

The KFRS spokesman added: "If you do light a bonfire the advice is to take extra care and never use petrol, barbecue lighting fluids or other accelerants on them.

"Also, never leave any fire unattended and if the bonfire gets out of control, never try to tackle it yourself, always call the fire service."

Crews were at the scene until just after 2.15pm.

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