

Press Release

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Breast Cancer UK welcomes call for political focus on disease prevention

London: Breast Cancer UK welcomes the Richmond Group of Charities call for far greater political action across all political parties to reduce preventable illnesses, outlined in its report, released today '[What is Preventing Progress?](#)'. The group, a coalition of 10 of the leading health and social care organisations in the voluntary sector, calls for a new partnership across government, the NHS, public services, charities and patients, that puts prevention first.

"As a charity dedicated to preventing breast cancer, [Breast Cancer UK](#) fully supports this call for a new political partnership to meet the enormous challenge that disease prevention demands. With cancer rates escalating, it's vital that prevention is put in the health spotlight over the coming decade. It must become society's next great debate and policy makers' priority," said Lynn Ladbrook, Chief Executive, Breast Cancer UK.

Many of the key recommendations in the report are policy measures that Breast Cancer UK considers will help the UK reduce the scale of suffering, as well as unnecessary financial costs, caused by preventable ill health, including;

- Establishing a national plan for health improvement, led by the Prime Minister;
- Making public health the business of all of Government;
- Making prevention a key consideration in all local authority responsibilities;
- Improving surveillance, reporting and research on preventable illness;
- Improving clarity and accountability for prevention; and
- Improving workplace health.

The report makes a key omission, however, by failing to include environmental factors as a key cause of ill health. Instead, it restricts its focus to the habits of individuals, such as smoking, inactivity, unhealthy diet and alcohol. Of the entire funding into cancer research in 2012, just 3.6% went into researching cancer prevention and as little as 1.1% went into investigating the 'exogenous' or environmental causes of cancers.

"This lack of focus and financial investment leads many to believe that environmental or chemical factors, such as pollution and harmful chemical exposures, are only a small risk factor for breast cancer and other diseases, yet this is contrary to scientific evidence and the opinion of many leading health organisations, including the World Health Organisation (1). We hope that today's report opens up a much needed debate into primary prevention and provides us all with an opportunity to get environmental and chemical exposures included as a key risk factor for disease, once and for all," added Ladbrook.

Breast Cancer UK has long advocated that prevention is better than cure. In October 2013, it launched a [manifesto](#) that challenged policy makers with 5 calls to action on the primary prevention of breast cancer.

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Notes to Editors:

1) A recent [report](#) released by WHO states: "Worldwide, there has been a failure to adequately address the underlying environmental causes of the increasing trends in endocrine diseases and disorders. Health-care systems do not have mechanisms in place to address the contribution of environmental risk factors to these trends. The benefits that can be gained by adopting primary preventive measures for dealing with them have largely remained unrealized."

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