



MILLIONS OF MEN 'DON'T KNOW HOW' TO TALK ABOUT CANCER SYMPTOMS, NEW RESEARCH SHOWS

****Macmillan Cancer Support warns of dangers of ignoring cancer symptoms and launches campaign targeting those most at risk****

New research by Macmillan Cancer Support released today shows 14% of men are putting off reporting worrying symptoms, including a lump or suspicious mole, because they do not know how to talk about changes to their bodies.¹ This could be equivalent to almost 3.5 million men in Great Britain who feel unable to talk about these changes².

The research, conducted by YouGov also reveals more than one in three men (38%) are worried about their health to the extent that they'd been 'kept awake at night'. Macmillan believes this shows that despite the bravado some may show to friends and family they could really be struggling to face their fears.³

Not talking about cancer worries is particularly common amongst men working in traditionally 'masculine' sectors like building and construction. A second survey conducted by Macmillan of 1,088 people who work in this industry⁴ reveals for the first time that, despite their health worries, almost half (43%) would feel discouraged from talking about changes to their health

¹ Macmillan Cancer Support/YouGov survey of 2,052 adults representative of the Great British population. 14% of men surveyed by YouGov indicated that they would be discouraged from talking to others about changes to their physical health (such as a lump, suspicious mole, persistent cough or pain, unexplained weight loss or tiredness etc.) because they would not know how to talk about the symptom(s)

² Macmillan Cancer Support indicative estimate calculated using 2014 ONS figures for the number of GB males aged 18+ (24,103,112). 14.34% of this is 3,456,386.

³ 38% of men surveyed by YouGov indicated they had experienced being kept awake at night/ having had difficulty sleeping in the last 12 months as a result of being worried about their physical and/or emotional health

⁴ Independent Macmillan Cancer Support survey of 1,088 employees currently working in the building and construction sector. Respondees to the survey are employees from: Travis Perkins, Benchmarx Kitchens & Joinery, Costain, Kier Group, Selco and Wolseley UK.

such as a lump, a suspicious mole or pain, in case they were perceived as ‘making a fuss’.⁵ Almost a quarter (22.9%) would feel discouraged because they are too embarrassed.⁶

This is especially concerning given that men are 60 per cent more likely to get cancer and 70 per cent more likely to die from the disease than women.⁷ Today Macmillan Cancer Support has launched the ‘*Don’t Let Cancer Ruin Your Foundations*’ campaign with building and construction sector partners Travis Perkins, Benchmarx Kitchens & Joinery, Kier Group, Costain, Selco and Wolseley UK. The campaign will raise awareness of the importance of reporting the signs and symptoms of cancer early amongst this group who are at higher risk, and will support them to do so.

Macmillan’s new research also indicates that more than one in 10 men (11%) who’ve noticed changes to their health in the last year have put off seeing a doctor because they are frightened that their symptoms might be a sign of a serious health condition.⁸ But shockingly a quarter of men working in the building and construction industry would not talk to anyone about changes to their health because they would not want to admit they were worried⁹ and one in seven men in this sector admitted that fear of a serious diagnosis would stop them going to see a doctor.¹⁰ Macmillan wants to help break through this new trend – a *Fear Of Speaking Out (FOSO)*.

⁵ Of the building and construction sector employees surveyed by Macmillan Cancer Support, when asked which reasons would discourage them from reporting symptoms regarding their physical health such as a lump, suspicious mole or pain, 43% of male respondees said it was because they didn’t want to make a fuss

⁶ Of the building and construction sector employees surveyed by Macmillan Cancer Support, when asked which reasons would discourage them from reporting symptoms regarding their physical health such as a lump, suspicious mole or pain, 22.9% of male respondees said it was because they were embarrassed

⁷ Men’s Health Forum. Slow on the uptake?

http://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf/mhf_bowel_cancer_project_report_2011_web.pdf

⁸ Of the respondees surveyed by YouGov who said they had experienced any of the listed changes in their health in the last 12 months that they had not been to the doctor about (all respondees weighted base 913, unweighted base 863), when asked the reason for this 11% of **male** respondees said it was because they are/ were worried that it might be serious

⁹ Of the building and construction sector employees surveyed by Macmillan Cancer Support, 24.5% of men answered that they would be discouraged from talking to others about physical health condition including a lump, suspicious mole or pain, because they would not want to admit they were worried

¹⁰ Of the building and construction sector employees surveyed by Macmillan Cancer Support who said they had experienced a health symptom in the last 12 months but had not been to the doctor about it, when asked the reason for this 15.2% said it was because they are worried that it might be serious

Former electrical engineer, Steve Stasos, 54, from Norfolk, was diagnosed with bladder cancer in 2008. He says: “I first noticed something wasn’t right when I was unable to urinate during the night but it never crossed my mind that it could be cancer. Eventually I was diagnosed and it felt like the world was closing in on me.

“As I went through treatment, I noticed a lot of the guys going through it all at the same time as me had clammed up and weren’t talking about their diagnoses. Very quickly, it became clear we were all desperate to talk about what we were going through but had just been too scared to voice our thoughts for fear of embarrassment.

“Despite being afraid of talking to my friends, family and colleagues about my diagnosis, I did open up and it was a real relief once I did. They may not have fully understood what I was going through, but I knew they were there for me and there was nothing to be ashamed of. With the help of a Macmillan grant, I’ve since set up a support group for men to talk about their experiences. It’s so important that men feel they can talk about their symptoms, diagnosis and cancer experience as a whole and draw support from others.”

Senior Macmillan Information Nurse John Newlands says: “It’s really important that both men and women are aware of the signs and symptoms of cancer and that they report any changes to their health as early as possible. We often find that men don’t know what they should look out for, or that they feel embarrassed or unsure when talking about these changes. So by working with a coalition of companies to provide Macmillan information and support we can ensure those most at risk of not speaking out about their cancer concerns are confident enough to do so. I’d urge anyone who would like more information to get in touch with Macmillan because no one should face the worry of a cancer diagnosis alone.”

The businesses supporting Macmillan’s *‘Don’t Let Cancer Ruin Your Foundations’* campaign are Travis Perkins, Benchmarx Kitchens & Joinery, Kier Group, Costain, Selco and Wolseley UK.

Commenting on the research, Andrew Harrison, COO Travis Perkins and Benchmarx Kitchens & Joinery added: “By hosting Macmillan’s bespoke information on the signs and symptoms of cancer we can

enable our teams and their customers to access vital, empowering and accurate information in a familiar and safe environment as they go about their daily lives. Our colleagues in branches often build up strong relationships with local customers so to be able to offer an additional level of support from a trusted place, is a change that we are proud to lead across

our sector. Between the coalition of the businesses involved we will have bespoke information at builders merchants and construction sites across the UK which we all hope will make a big difference to our colleagues and customers.”

For more information about the campaign and the signs and symptoms of cancer please visit www.macmillan.org.uk/checkup