'Mesothelioma: the silent epidemic’ a series of seminars throughout the UK

Spreading awareness of mesothelioma is crucial if sufferers are to be diagnosed correctly and quickly, and receive the right kind of medical and palliative care.

Many healthcare workers may never have come across a mesothelioma patient before, and early symptoms can be difficult to diagnose.

Irwin Mitchell Solicitors kindly agreed to sponsor a series of seminars in the UK, focusing on the medical and legal aspects of mesothelioma. The seminars are aimed at healthcare professionals including doctors, nurses (Macmillan and palliative care), radiologists, respiratory physicians, palliative care doctors, oncologists, and social workers and GPs.

A typical agenda for discussion would include:

What is Mesothelioma?; the nature of the disease, how it is diagnosed, the prognosis; obtaining compensation for victims of mesothelioma; welfare benefits and mesothelioma; question and answer session: symptom control and mesothelioma; and advances in treatment of mesothelioma.

Each area of discussion is presented by an expert in that particular field. A recent Seminar held at the RHA (Royal Society of Art) is London helped raise £3,000 for the June Hancock Fund. After the event, BBC broadcaster and Fund patron, Geeta Guru-

June’s Fund pays for more booklets as demand grows

The June Hancock Mesothelioma Research Fund has again financed the updating and printing of information for people with Mesothelioma and their carers. Already over 50,000 copies of Mavis Robinson’s booklet have been distributed to hospitals, hospices and specialist nurse teams, providing them with an invaluable wealth of experience and information.

This is the only available booklet written with an invaluable wealth of experience and information for mesothelioma sufferers and their carers, and is distributed nationally.

This is a vital part of the Fund’s aims and the June Hancock Fund is happy to support it. Keeping the booklet free of charge enables healthcare workers to pass them on to patients quickly and easily.

Lottery bid from Ridings group

With support from Macmillan and the Fund, this recently established support group provides a base from which there is a telephonic helpline offering advice for mesothelioma sufferers and their families. Run by the group themselves, it offers guidance on a whole range of topics including legal, benefits, welfare and healthcare advice.

Feedback from those using RASAG is sought too, ensuring that they are providing the very best service.

The Arley (Leeds) premises were set up with a grant of £500 from the Fund, and the cheque was received by Mavis Robinson on behalf of RASAG at a presentation at Sheffield Wednesday Football Club.

Although retired (!) Mavis Robinson continues to work closely with the Ridings Asbestos Support and Awareness Group, volunteering her advice on a part time basis.

As well as applying for charitable status, the Group is preparing a bid to the Lottery Commission for £110,000, and so hopefully this invaluable service will continue for many years to come.

RASAG contacts:

Telephone: 0113 231 1010
E-mail: info@asbestos-action.org.uk
Address: 35b Town Street, Arley, Leeds, LS12 3AA

Did you know?????

• Someone dies every five hours from mesothelioma in the UK
• There were 1,628 deaths from mesothelioma in 2000 in Britain
• Mesothelioma is preventable – the only known cause is exposure to asbestos
• The annual death toll will rise to around 3,000 by 2010 and will remain above 1,500 until about 2025
• There are 23% more deaths from mesothelioma than from cervical cancer
• Deaths from mesothelioma have increased fourfold since 1980 in the UK
• There will be over a million deaths in western Europe by 2035
• The disease can take up to 60 years to develop following exposure to asbestos
• The greatest risk group are men born between 1945 and 1959

How to make a donation to the Fund

Making a donation couldn’t be easier…simply send a cheque or postal order made payable to “The June Hancock Mesothelioma Research Fund” to the following address:

Adrian Budgen
C/o Irwin Mitchell
The June Hancock Mesothelioma Research Fund
St Peters House
Hartfield
Harehills
Sheffield
S1 2EL

Telephone 0114 2744420 and ask for Pam Arkless

PLEASE NOTE: If you are a taxpayer in the UK, please ask for a Gift Aid form so that the Fund can claim the tax back.

What are the Fund’s objectives?

The Fund aims to encourage and sponsor important research into mesothelioma, and to raise the awareness of the disease. The Fund aims to offer real help and guidance to sufferers and their families and carers.

History:

To investigate the relationship between low dose asbestos inhalation and mesothelioma;
• To contribute to clinical trials with novel drug therapies for mesothelioma;
• To establish research on the tumour biology of mesothelioma.

The Fund helps to organise a series of educational seminars for doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals, thereby increasing both the knowledge and awareness of mesothelioma. This can be of real benefit for the patient and their families.

The Fund helps finance the Mesothelioma Information Service, a helpline and information and advice service for sufferers and their carers. Used by healthcare professionals too, this service is invaluable.

The Service provides access to a national network of specialist nurses.

Anyone in the UK conducting research into mesothelioma is eligible, and welcome, to apply for support from the Fund. This includes scientists, doctors and nurses.

Your feedback counts!

We hope you have found this Newsletter informative and helpful....so that we can continue to provide the best information we would welcome your feedback, or any suggestions you may have. Do you have any fundraising ideas to share with other supporters of the Fund?

Do you know of any alternative treatments such as Aromatherapy or Reflexology, that may benefit other sufferers, or make regular donation to the Fund?

Your comments on the first issue really count!

Please write to The Editor, c/o Adrian Budgen, Irwin Mitchell, Sheffield, S1 2EL (E-mail: budgena@irwinmitchell.co.uk) for any of the above, or with suggestions for the next Newsletter.......THANK YOU

The trustees

Adrian Budgen
Adrian is a solicitor and partner in the law firm Irwin Mitchell, based in Sheffield. He represents only claimants suffering from asbestos-related injuries.

Adrian successfully took June Hancock’s legal battle all the way to the Court of Appeal, where it became a landmark case in relation to environmental exposure to asbestos. He and June became firm friends. Adrian is also a lay member of the All Party Parliamentary Occupational Safety and Health Group/Asbestos Sub Committee and campaigns for the rights of asbestos victims and mesothelioma sufferers in particular.

Dr Martin Muers
Martin is a consultant physician in respiratory medicine and palliative care medicine at the Leeds General Infirmary and chair of the British Thoracic Society/Medical Research Council mesothelioma study group “MSO1” trial.

Martine was June Hancock’s consultant at Killingbeck Hospital in Leeds, and they acquired mutual admiration and respect for each other.

Russell Hancock
Russell is June Hancock’s son. He lives and works in Leeds as an operations manager for a large property development company. He is married, with a two year old daughter called Emily June. He takes an active interest in the Fund.

Dr Ed Neville
Ed is a consultant physician in respiratory medicine and palliative care medicine at the University of Leeds. He has looked after patients with mesothelioma and his city since his appointment in 1983 and previously in Newcastle. He is one of several papers relating to palliative care in mesothelioma.

Mavis Robinson MBE
Mavis Robinson MBE is a retired Macmillan nurse in Leeds in the 1980s and 90s, seeing increasing numbers of a then little known and little reported incurable cancer we know as mesothelioma. She set up a national mesothelioma help and information line in 1998 and an advice pamphlet shortly afterwards. This works tirelessly for the cause, and although officially retired, she works with the Ridings Asbestos Support Group (see page 4). Mavis was a great help to June and her family during her illness. In 2002 Mavis was awarded an MBE in recognition of her outstanding work.

Kate Hill
Kate is a research fellow at the University of Leeds, and met June Hancock a number of times during her illness. Kate has worked closely with Dr Martin Muers as his research assistant and was pleased to become a trustee of the Fund.

See the fund website at: www.leeds.ac.uk/meso

We, the Trustees and Patrons of the Fund, are all proud to be part of the Fund. We are reliant on donations, we want to thank each and every one of the donors so far...every penny makes a difference. THANKYOU!
Mavis Robinson MBE!!

Famously someone as deserving as Mavis Robinson achieves such public and high profile recognition, but we are delighted to report that Mavis Robinson has been made a Member of the Order of the British Empire in the same year that June Hancock won her compensation case. Mavis is a well known and respected lawyer and someone who, over the years, has spearheaded the campaign for justice for asbestos victims both in the UK and abroad for many years. Mavis has been recognised by her peers as a leader in her field and she is a founder member of the Asbestos Bar Association.

Medical and research support

Mavis was a journalist, whilst reporting her legal case in the Yorkshire Post, she said “I have only one theme and that is to get compensation for my clients and their families”.

Mavis has been a tireless advocate for asbestos victims both in the UK and abroad for many years. She has given her time and energy to help asbestos victims and their families, and remains to this day as a passionate campaigner for justice for asbestos victims.

“Since I was diagnosed with mesothelioma, I have been absolutely determined to ensure that other people who are going through the same thing have the same opportunities that we do. It is important for people to be aware of the illness and to be able to access the support and resources that are available to them.”

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