

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00.01 THURSDAY 28 AUGUST

Cancer Drugs Fund expanded to £280m

Thousands more cancer patients in England will be offered vital treatments in a £160m boost to the Cancer Drugs Fund, Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt announced today.

The fund has helped more than 55,000 cancer patients since it was set up four years ago to provide pioneering drugs to those who need them most. It will now be increased from £200m a year to £280m a year – meaning many more patients with rare conditions will benefit from life-extending drugs recommended by their doctor.

With the number of people diagnosed with cancer each year increasing by nine per cent since 2009, and the rising costs of ever more sophisticated drugs, the Fund has an important role in helping patients access treatment.

Alongside the multimillion pound injection of funds to help patients, cancer experts at NHS England have pinpointed two new cutting-edge drugs which will be added to the fund. These are:

- Xtandi (enzalutamide) for prostate cancer
- Revlimid (lenalidomide) for a new group of patients with myelodysplastic syndrome, a rare blood condition.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

“It’s vitally important that as many people as possible have access to these pioneering, life-enhancing drugs, and we need to continue to focus our efforts on increasing access to these innovative treatments, whilst ensuring that all patients continue to receive the effective drugs which are right for them.

“By protecting the NHS budget, we have been able to create this fund which has given hope to many thousands of people, their families and friends, and has an essential role in helping us realise our ambition to be the best place in Europe to survive cancer.”

So that this extensive additional funding is spent in the best way for patients, expert clinicians will evaluate the listed drugs to ensure patients are offered the most effective drugs for their condition and new drugs can be added to the list, whilst drugs which are the least clinically effective will not be routinely available to new patients.

NHS England will also negotiate with the pharmaceutical industry on cost to ensure best value for the NHS, and are working with NICE, researchers and patient charities to examine the wider process by which the way the NHS makes commissioning decisions on new cancer drugs.

Following an extension in 2013, the Fund is confirmed until March 2016. Longer term, the DH will consider carefully with NHS England the best course of action for the fund in the future. The new money means the amount committed will top £1 billion in total.

The Government’s £750 million cancer strategy aims to improve cancer survival rates and make sure everyone gets the best treatment.

Ends

Notes to editors

For media enquiries, please contact the Department of Health press office on 020 7210 5738