

**22 November 2011****Communications Department**

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**Media Release****If in doubt, get it checked out**

'If in doubt, get it checked out' is the message coming out of the mouths of staff in the oral surgery department at the RUH this month.

They are supporting a national campaign to raise awareness of mouth cancer, a killer disease which is on the increase, and people affected by it are getting younger – although most people affected are still over 40.

Mr Ceri Hughes, Consultant Oral and Maxillofacial/Head and Neck Surgeon, says: "The British Dental Health Foundation estimates around 6,000 new cases of mouth cancer a year are being diagnosed in the UK.

"In 2010 in our region we saw 230 head and neck cancers, of which about 70 were mouth cancers. In most cases our patients delay seeking opinion for mouth cancer. There is no doubt that picking up a mouth cancer earlier makes treatment easier and chances of cure higher."

Symptoms include ulcers which do not heal within three weeks, red and white patches on the tongue, and unusual lumps or swelling.

Mr Hughes adds: "We encourage anyone who is worried about an ulcer in the mouth, which does not heal for three weeks, to seek specialist help from their dentist or doctor. If in doubt, get it checked out."

Tobacco is considered to be the main cause of mouth cancer, with three in four cases being linked to smoking. Drinking in excess is also a known factor, with those who both smoke and drink excessively being up to 30 times more likely to be at risk. Most recently it has also been associated with HPV, which is a sexually transmitted infection.

Other risk factors include a poor diet. Research has shown that an increased intake of fish, vegetables, fruit and eggs can help lower risks of cancer.

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