

## Centre of Excellence in blood cancer research unveiled in Birmingham

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Blood cancer patients and survivors joined researchers and doctors at the University of Birmingham and Queen Elizabeth Hospital to celebrate its unveiling as a 'Centre of Excellence' by the national blood cancer charity Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research.

Ex-England and Wolves footballer Geoff Thomas was among those who attended the plaque unveiling today (Monday, 20 September) at the Centre for Clinical Haematology. Mr Thomas still receives check-ups at the Centre after receiving a life-saving bone marrow transplant for leukaemia at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in 2005.

The charity currently invests more than £10 million in 26 research projects at Birmingham, which is recognised for its world-class research into improving bone marrow transplantation and also the development of new drugs to treat leukaemia and lymphoma.

The unveiling of the Centre of Excellence is part of the charity's plans to focus investment in leading research institutions across the UK.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital is home to one of the UK's largest stem cell transplant centres. Transplants are often the last chance for many blood cancer patients of all ages. Unfortunately, they remain risky procedures, with dangerous side effects.

Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research's scientists work closely with doctors at Queen Elizabeth Hospital to ensure that any breakthroughs in diagnosis and treatment benefit blood cancer patients throughout Birmingham and the West Midlands as soon as possible. The charity is currently investing in eight clinical trials in Birmingham.

One such trial aims to optimise the ability of the body's immune system to eradicate leukaemia after stem cell transplants by giving a new anti-leukaemic agent, 'Azacitidine'.

Chris Gallimore, aged 63, took part in the trial after receiving a transplant in September 2009 to treat acute myeloid leukaemia. He said: "The team at Birmingham are fantastic, from the receptionists to the consultants - you feel not just in very capable hands but very caring hands as well. There's also a wonderful interaction between scientific research and clinical application - the latest drugs are available on clinical trials and you feel that treatment is constantly moving forward."

Another pioneering research project at the University of Birmingham is exploring the use of existing drugs in new ways for patients with blood cancers who cannot tolerate conventional treatments.

Dr David Grant, Scientific Director of Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research, said: "The key feature of our Centres of Excellence is the transfer of world class research from the laboratory to new treatments for local blood cancer patients. This is particularly impressive in Birmingham where research is showing tremendous promise and we are currently investing in eight clinical trials. This approach is vital to meet our goal of routinely curing all blood cancers."

Charlie Craddock, Professor of Haemato-oncology at University of Birmingham and Director of the Blood and Marrow Transplant Unit, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, said: "The pace of progress in delivering new treatments for blood cancers is very exciting. Birmingham attracts leading researchers and clinical haematologists, meaning that local blood cancer patients have access to the newest and best treatment around. Investment from charities such as Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research is vital to help this to continue."

For further information, please contact Henry Winter at Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research Press Office on 020 7269 9019, 07824 375880 or email:

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### Notes to Editors

Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research is the only UK charity solely dedicated to research into blood cancers, including leukaemia, lymphoma and myeloma. These cancers are diagnosed in around 28,500 children, teenagers and adults in the UK every year. Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research was previously known as Leukaemia Research and has changed its name to raise awareness of its longstanding commitment to research into all the blood cancers - not just leukaemia.

We celebrate our 50th anniversary in 2010 and our expertise and focus enables us to invest in only the best UK research into better diagnosis, treatments and cures. As we receive no government funding and rely entirely on voluntary support, we need to raise £120 million in the next five years to continue this life-saving research. Further information, including patient information booklets, is available from [www.llresearch.org.uk](http://www.llresearch.org.uk) (<http://www.llresearch.org.uk>) or on 020 7405 0101.

The University of Birmingham is a truly vibrant, global community and an internationally-renowned institution. Its work brings people from across the world to Birmingham, including researchers and teachers and more than four thousand international students from nearly 150 different countries.

The University is home to nearly 30,000 students. With more than 7,500 postgraduate students from across the world, Birmingham is one of the most popular universities for postgraduate study in the UK.

The University has a global reputation and is ranked 59th in the world in the latest Times Higher Education-QS World University Rankings.

The University is the eighth largest employer in the Birmingham/Solihull sub-region and plays an integral role in the economic, social and cultural growth of local and regional communities; working closely with businesses and organisations, employing approximately 6,000 staff and providing 10,000 graduates annually.

The University contributes £662 million to the City of Birmingham and £779 million to the West Midlands region, with an annual income of more than £388.6 million.

University Hospitals Birmingham (UHB) runs three hospitals in South Birmingham, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham (QEHB), Selly Oak Hospital and the old Queen Elizabeth Hospital. QEHB is Birmingham's first new acute hospital in 70 years. The first patients moved in on 16 June 2010, and it will become fully operational by June 2012. QEHB will be the largest single site teaching hospital in Europe, overtaking the St James in Leeds. It has 1,213 beds, 30 theatres and the largest critical care unit in Europe with 100 beds. The hospitals are a regional centre for trauma, burns, plastics, neurosciences and cancer. UHB is the major provider of NHS Research and Development in the West Midlands.