

University of Birmingham's historic clock tower wears it pink for Breast Cancer Campaign

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The 110 metre high clock tower joined a number of iconic buildings across the UK and Ireland turning pink as part of the 10th anniversary of the "Wear it Pink" day organised by the Breast Cancer Campaign. Built in 1900, the clock tower is one of the tallest buildings in Birmingham and nicknamed 'Old Joe' after Joseph Chamberlain, the University's first Chancellor.

The University's clock tower joined a number of historic landmarks to turn pink in October for Breast Cancer ACTION month, including Buckingham Palace and Trafalgar Square. On 26th October the University joined many others in the fight against breast cancer across Birmingham with shops, schools and a number of individuals taking part in wear it pink 2012.

Breast Cancer is the most common cancer in the UK with around 48,000 people diagnosed in the UK alone each year. The University is one of the UK's leading centres for cancer research turning pioneering research into life-changing new treatments.

Professor Paul Moss, Head of School of Cancer Sciences said: 'The last 20 years has seen major improvements in survival following a diagnosis of breast cancer and we are proud that Birmingham scientists have made important contributions to this progress. However, there is much more to be done and we remain committed to doing everything we can to develop new treatments for this disease'.

Breast Cancer Campaign's Pink Science initiative currently funds research projects at the University worth nearly £900,000 to investigate both how breast cancer starts and how it spreads to other parts of the body. University researchers are committed to developing new approaches in the diagnosis and treatment of the disease. Current study includes:

- Current University of Birmingham senior lecturer and previous Breast Cancer Campaign Research Fellow, Dr Jo Morris, has been funded to lead research into how BRCA1 (a defective gene that carries a high risk of developing breast cancer) is controlled. This could provide vital clues about which faults in this gene cause cancer; information that could lead to more accurate BRCA genetic testing.

Dr Morris said, "I hope my findings will pave the way for a gene test that can help women who at the moment have to make difficult decisions about their treatment options and alleviate the uncertainty they face."

- New to the University's Cancer sciences department, Birmingham Fellow, Dr Clare Davies is seeking to understand a group of enzymes known as Protein Arginine Methyltransferases (PRMTs), which are elevated in breast cancer patients. The research will explore whether the increased amounts of PRMTs contribute to the development of breast cancer or occur as a consequence of the disease.

Dr Davies said, "increasing our knowledge about the behaviour of PRMTs will be fundamental to the field as it will enable us to more precisely target treatment of the disease. Even though the breast cancer screening strategy has greatly improved over the last ten years, drug resistance is becoming increasingly common and therefore we need to be constantly developing new avenues for the treatment of the disease to ensure survival."



Notes to editors

1. Breast Cancer Campaign

Breast cancer campaign, established in 1988, is a unique community of scientists, supporters and people with the aim of researching the cure for breast cancer. The charity aims to be the leading specialist in breast cancer research across the UK and Ireland, making a significant impact on breast cancer for the benefit of patients.

2. The School for Cancer Sciences, University of Birmingham

The School is one of the 5 Schools within the College of Medical and Dental Sciences and encompasses approximately 90% of cancer research on the campus. The School has a strong 'translational' agenda seeking to deliver new therapies from the bench and into clinical practice as soon as possible.

3. The Cancer Research UK Centre at Birmingham

The CRUK Centre at Birmingham is one of the world's premier translational cancer research institutes. Underpinned by excellent basic science across the University campus, we work with many clinical partners to improve the outlook for cancer patients. Our portfolio is broad and ranges from leading research in NMR spectroscopy through to large clinical trials that change the standard of care in diseases such as breast cancer. We were the first designated CRUK Centre and have recently been designated as a 'Centre of Excellence' by Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research.

4. The University of Birmingham Clock Tower

Built in 1900, the clock tower is one of the tallest buildings in Birmingham and nicknamed 'Old Joe' after Joseph Chamberlain, the University's first Chancellor. The tower is 110 metres high – just higher than Big Ben in London – and is based on the Mangia Tower in Sienna, Italy. It is said that the tower was the inspiration for J R R Tolkien's 'all seeing eye' in the Lord of the Rings series. The largest bell weighs six tons and it is rumoured that if you walk under the tower when the clock chimes, you will fail your degree.

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