University's historic clock tower turns red for Cure Leukaemia

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The University of Birmingham's historic clock tower (Old Joe) will be illuminated in red light this Thursday for Cure Leukaemia.

Marking the end of the West Midlands Red Alert Appeal in partnership with BBC Radio WM 95.6 raising money for Cure Leukaemia, the University's 110 metre high clock tower will be one of a number of iconic buildings in the city to turn red for the campaign on 28 February 2013.

25,000 new cases of leukaemia develop every year in the UK and it affects 7,000 adults in the West Midlands. The Red Alert appeal has raised over £125,000 over the last year to support life-saving Cure Leukaemia research and clinical trials for blood cancer patients with new drugs not available on the NHS.

Over the last ten years Birmingham has become established as a centre of excellence for the treatment of Leukaemia. Scientists at the University of Birmingham and clinicians at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital have made a major contribution to the international drive to improve the prospects for patients with leukaemia through the Centre for Clinical Haematology, which enables patients to have access to new therapies in a carefully controlled clinical environment.

Professor Charles Craddock explains the importance of Cure Leukaemia support for cancer research at the University: "The Centre for Clinical Haematology is a shared initiative by the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and University of Birmingham Centre for Clinical Trials which allows patients from across our huge region to benefit from the very latest new drug and transplant therapies."

James McLaughlin CEO of Cure Leukaemia said "We are absolutely delighted with success of the BBC Radio WM Red Alert Campaign and we have been able to fund seven new nurses in the West Midlands, which would not have been possible without the generosity of BBC WM listeners. The partnership has been fantastic in not only raising funds, but greater awareness of the amazing work taking place at the Centre for Clinical Haematology in Birmingham and the support Cure Leukaemia offers to ensure this continues long in to the future."

The University's School of Cancer Sciences is also home to the specialist Children's Cancer Trials Team, the designated National Trials Unit for childhood cancer and leukaemia trials. Research encompasses laboratory-based research, pre-clinical evaluation of promising new anti-leukaemia drugs and clinical trials for children and young people with leukaemia.

Dr Pamela Kearns, Director of the School of Cancer Sciences and lead for the Children's Cancer Trials Team, explains the team's current focus: "Although most children with Leukaemia can be cured with current treatments, some children have very resistant leukaemia that is difficult to cure. Our research is focused on investigating the biology of leukaemia that fail to respond to currently available drugs and developing new treatments directed to overcoming this resistance."

The University of Birmingham is at the forefront of developing new treatments to improve quality of life for thousands of cancer patients. To find out more about the breadth of the University's Cancer Research and how you can support please visit the Circles of Influence website: **http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/alumni/giving/index.aspx (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/alumni/giving/index.aspx)**

Notes to editors

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.

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 – is the largest free-standing clock-tower in the UK. 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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