



**LET'S TALK ABOUT MOUTH CANCER**  
**SCOTTISH CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION**  
SC045100

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Risk of increase in late diagnosis of mouth cancer during Covid-19**

A Scottish charity is highlighting concerns about the impact of Covid-19 on the early detection of mouth cancer.

And it is calling on the Chief Dental Officers of the four UK countries to promote the use of mouth self examination (MSE), which would enable people to pick up any persistent changes in their mouths at an early stage. They could then flag up those changes right away to their dentist or doctor.

The charity, Let's Talk About Mouth Cancer (LTAMC) has also offered the use of its educational resources to help spread the message far and wide.

It has written an open letter to the Chief Dental Officers in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland about its concerns and to propose the promotion and use of mouth self examination.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced dental practices to close in March and, in Scotland, they are not expected to re-open until August at the earliest.

Only patients requiring urgent treatment (eg. severe pain or infection) are seen in dedicated Urgent Dental Care Centres across the country.

Charity trustee and NHS dentist, Ewan MacKessack-Leitch, explained: "During a dental check-up, a dentist will always assess the mouth for the early signs and symptoms of mouth cancer.

"The potentially lifesaving opportunity to check for signs of mouth cancer at routine dental visits is being missed. Early detection is vital and leads to a higher chance of survival – the earlier mouth cancer is detected the quicker it can be treated."

Barbara Boyd, a mouth cancer survivor from Fife, said: "Having my mouth cancer diagnosed at an early stage is what saved my life. MSE is easy, all you need is a mirror, a bright light and your own two hands. If you notice any changes in your mouth which persist for more than two weeks it is crucial that you get in touch with your dentist for advice, even if they are not open for routine care."

Barbara is a strong supporter of the charity and its work and has done a lot in recent months to raise the profile of the charity, and to increase awareness of this disease and promote MSE.

**Ends**

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**Notes to Editors:**

1. Approximately 7800 new cases of oral cancer are diagnosed each year in the UK. Despite advances in treatment the 5-year survival rate remains 50%. Picking up the disease at an early stage improves the survival rate.
2. Dentists play a vital role in early detection of mouth cancer. On routine visits, besides checking the teeth, dentists examine the inside of the mouth to check for changes which might represent a mouth cancer. At early stages mouth cancers are painless and may go unnoticed by the patient. Without these regular checkups, there is a risk that mouth cancers will not be picked up at an early stage and will eventually present much later on, when they are harder to treat and where survival/ prognosis is poor.
3. Let's Talk About Mouth Cancer is a Scottish charity that works to raise awareness of mouth cancer. Its main aim is to improve prognosis of the disease through early detection. A big part of the charity's work is focused on the promotion of mouth self examination. <https://www.ltamc.org/>
4. Mouth self examination is easy. All you need is a mirror, a bright light and your own two hands to examine the skin inside your mouth, looking for ulcers, bumps, and red or white patches. If any of these are discovered and they do not resolve spontaneously after two weeks, you are strongly advised to seek help from your dentist or doctor.

For more information, please contact Kathleen Travers at Face PR, on 07795 474220 or [kathleen@facepr.co.uk](mailto:kathleen@facepr.co.uk)

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