

6/9/04 Welsh Development Agency: Welsh Milestone in the *Fight Against Cancer*

Cancer patients in Wales will benefit from new developments with the launch of the Wales Cancer Bank, which will revolutionise the opportunities for cancer research in Wales.

Minister for Health and Social Services, Jane Hutt, officially launched the Wales Cancer Bank today at the Coal Exchange in Cardiff Bay.

Patients with possible or confirmed cancer, plus some other patients, will be asked to take part in the Wales Cancer Bank project. Their permission will be sought to keep a portion of their tissue, and also a blood sample, for future scientific studies. These studies will help to establish the causes of cancer, help identify new areas for treatment and to select the best treatments for individual patients. This may take years to achieve but is a major investment for future generations.

The Minister praised the work of the Cancer Bank and said, "This pioneering development will bring many benefits to Wales.

"The knowledge gleaned from research carried out by specialists working with the Cancer Bank will make a major contribution to the health of people in Wales, and indeed the wider world.

"The aim is to achieve a greater understanding of cancer and to be able to provide better treatments for patients with cancer..

"This initiative clearly demonstrates our commitment to developing a scientific evidence base to form the basis of our fight against cancer.

Professor Malcolm Mason, Director of the Wales Cancer Bank said, 'As a doctor treating cancer patients, I am only too aware of the limitations of our current treatments. We desperately need a new assault on this disease and I believe that the Wales Cancer Bank will provide just that'.

Professor the Baroness Iora Finlay of Llandaff supports the initiative and said, 'The challenge is that cancer is so complicated and studies need to be done on hundreds, or even thousands, of samples to give meaningful results. That is why it is important that the Wales Cancer Bank is a huge scale project. Indeed, it will be a unique resource in the UK and will work closely with similar initiatives in Europe'.

Patient group representatives from around Wales have been fully involved in the setting up of the Wales Cancer Bank and Mr Neil Formstone said, 'As far as patients are concerned, this is one of the most important projects to fight cancer in Wales in the last decade'.

The Wales Cancer Bank was established in April 2003 and is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government.