

FEATURES

HEALTH

INITIATIVE LOOKS AT LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF FIGHTING DISEASE

Changing the way cancer patients are looked after

Move to extend care when patient treatment has ended

By **RACHEL PARRY**
rachel.parry@thestar.co.uk
@rachelparry7

When someone is diagnosed with cancer, the traditional focus has always been on treating the disease.

But in an era of modern medicine and advanced research, improving survival rates mean a new challenge is emerging – not just curing cancer, but caring for survivors in the years and decades that come after initial treatment.

Sheffield is fortunate enough to have a late effects service which concentrates solely in this area, caring for cancer survivors to ensure that further health issues are spotted, monitored and, where possible, prevented.

Dr Diana Greenfield, who cares for patients at Sheffield's late effects clinics at Hallamshire Hospital and Weston Park Hospital,



The Sheffield cancer survivorship and late effects service recently won a patient safety and care award

The treatment cancer patients receive is toxic and can be quite harsh

explains the after-effects of cancer treatment can take various forms.

She said: "The treatment cancer patients receive is toxic and can be quite harsh. As such some patients are left with long term health issues or late effects of previous treatment.

"We mainly care for young people who have had

cancer as a child, young adults and people who have had a bone marrow transplant, that have either developed problems or are at risk of doing so.

"Not everyone will suffer later effects but the more treatment a patient has at a younger age, the more at risk they are. These late effects could be something fairly



Dr Diana Greenfield, with patient Alan Scott, in her late effects clinic

minor such as high blood pressure or a shortage of natural vitamins, or it could be something more serious such as diabetes.

"In younger cancer patients treatment can cause hormone problems which can affect their fertility.

"We don't just look at one part of the body, but at a patient's physical and mental health as a whole, meaning we have to be all things to all men."

In order to deliver such a diverse service the late effects clinics are made up of a multi-disciplinary team consisting of medical consultants from different specialities as well as specialist nurses and psychologists.

The holistic care the clinics offer through practical advice and support to reduce patient anxiety after cancer treatment can be

priceless to individuals who are plagued by fears and memories connected to the life-threatening disease.

Regular patient Patricia Froggatt, from Handsworth, describes the clinic as her 'lifeline' and says she would be totally lost without it.

The 46-year-old has battled with a catalogue of health problems since her childhood, having been diagnosed with leukaemia at the age of 12.

She underwent a bone marrow transplant aged 16 to treat the disease but has since suffered long-term effects including diabetes, pains in her legs and eye problems. She also had a second battle with the disease in 2006 when she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Reflecting on her ordeal, Patricia explained what the

STEVE TAYLOR



Julie Rogal is a patient at the late effects clinic



Patricia Froggatt is a patient at the late effects clinic

late effects clinic means to her.

She said: "I feel safe here – it's my lifeline. The people here are wonderful – they understand what I've been through and what I'm still going through."

Patricia recalled losing her hair in her teens and receiving the devastating blow from doctors that she would not be able to have children.

"People think that because you don't have the disease any more you're better but these things stick with you,

"It also affects what you can do in later life – I'm a fighter but I've had to give up work, I just don't have the energy anymore."

Fellow patient Julie Rogal, from Retford, shares Patricia's frustrations of cancer preventing her from

doing things others take for granted.

Julie, 58, was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma in 2003 and had to undergo a cell transplant in 2010 as a final option to fight the disease.

She said: "Without the transplant I would have died so my entire focus was on that – even afterwards I didn't think about the effects the treatment might cause later in life.

"I was expecting to pick up my life where I left off but it's not happened which is incredibly frustrating and can leave me feeling quite low. I suffer from chronic fatigue but the clinic is amazing in supporting me. The team help me to manage my expectations of what I can do and is trying to improve my stamina levels."

Initially set up in 1996,

Sheffield's late effects service is reputedly the first in the western world and has become internationally renowned for its work in caring for people living with and beyond cancer.

The team's pioneering work was recognised when it was awarded a Patient Safety and Care Award – one of the most prestigious accolades in British health care.

Judges praised the service for 'offering a compelling service that shows the way for future cancer care'.

With new projections highlighting that one in two people will get cancer in their lifetime by 2020 but almost four in 10 will not die from the disease, the late effects clinic's leading work in anticipating and monitoring possible problems is more important now than ever before.



Dr Diana Greenfield, centre, with patient Alan Scott and support worker Eileen Bruce, left