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Mike Richards  
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October 2006

Dear Mike,

Going Further on cancer Waits

Thank you for your letter asking for Cancer Research UK's views on 'Going Further on Cancer Waits'.

I am sorry for the delay in replying. Cancer Research UK strongly believes that the introduction of waiting time targets has been a key focus for removing delays in the cancer patient journey. It is very heartening to see how much progress has been made since the 'two week target from urgent referral to first visit' was established in the NHS Cancer Plan in 2000.

I enclose a completed consultation form, from which you will see that Cancer Research UK agrees with the broad direction of travel to encompass more patients with cancer within the existing waiting time targets, rather than compressing the targets themselves. However, there are a couple of additional points I wanted to make about waiting times in general, outlined below.

As you point out in your paper, only a third of cancer patients currently fall within the urgent referral target. While the attached proposals will enable even more patients to benefit from the targets, this approach still leaves some cancer patients outside of the waiting time targets. This is deeply concerning and we would like to see further action taken to address this inequality.

We would also like to see a stronger emphasis on introducing measures that will facilitate GPs in their task of identifying and filtering out people who need an urgent referral, to accompany the introduction of the extended targets. The concern is that patients whose cancer does not fall within the remit of the National Screening Programmes will lose out. This can be exacerbated in cancers for which early symptoms are more difficult to recognise because they are so rarely seen by individual general practitioners.

I look forward to hearing from you with a new date for the workshop. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Toy'. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'J' and a cursive 'Toy'.

Professor John Toy  
Medical Director  
**Cancer Research UK**