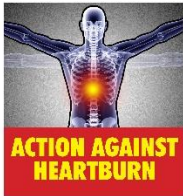


VOLUNTEERS



Action Against Heartburn – Before it's too late **Charities promoting earlier diagnosis** **of oesophageal and gastric cancer**

www.actionagaintheartburn.org.uk



@ActionHeartburn

OESOPHAGEAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH – VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you very much for volunteering to help with our campaign for Oesophageal Cancer Awareness Month – February.

The reason we are conducting this campaign is the public health problem of oesophageal cancer. In the UK, around 8,700 are diagnosed with this disease each year, and around 7,700 die from it. About 70% of the cases are oesophageal adenocarcinoma. The UK has the highest rate of OAC in the world, and it has been rising eightfold in the last three decades. OAC is associated with Barrett's Oesophagus that is caused by long term reflux, and persistent heartburn. If we can promote the diagnosis and monitoring of Barrett's Oesophagus it is much more likely that people will be able to have this condition treated (for instance with radio frequency ablation) before it can develop into cancer, or, if they do develop cancer, they will be diagnosed at an early stage when the outcomes are much better. We therefore aim to make an impact on a significant part of the future oesophageal cancer risk.

So this campaign is largely targeted at customers of community pharmacists who have been repeatedly purchasing over-the-counter heartburn remedies like Gaviscon, Rennie's, Tums and Nexium.

We would like you to visit your local pharmacies (including supermarkets) and invite them to:

- Give advice to customers who are regular consumers of heartburn medication, and to display our yellow patient information leaflets that are in the pack we are sending you, together with some plastic leaflet display stands. Our experience has been that not all pharmacies will wish to use these stands on their counters, but if you would like more to be supplied, please let me know. It is not a question of alarming customers unnecessarily that they may have cancer; but persistent heartburn is not normal and the underlying causes should be investigated.
- Pharmacies can also use our smaller pharmacy bag insert sheets for heartburn medication. Again, not all pharmacies will wish to use these, but they do have the advantage of making sure that targeted customers have appropriate written information.
- We have also included some posters and A4 patient information sheets that can be distributed and displayed.

The organisations supporting *Action Against Heartburn* are: AUGIS – Association of Upper GI Surgeons; Barrett's Oesophagus UK; Barrett's Wessex; BSG – British Society of Gastroenterology; Cancer Research UK; CARD – Campaign Against Reflux Disease; GUTS UK (formerly CORE) – Funding research into diseases of the gut, liver and pancreas; FORT – Fighting Oesophageal Reflux Together; GOSH - Gastro-Oesophageal Support & Help, Bristol; Gutsy Group; Heartburn Cancer UK; Humberside Oesophageal Support Group; Michael Blake Foundation; Oesophagoose -National Oesophago-Gastric Cancer Awareness; OOSO – Oxfordshire Oesophageal and Stomach Organisation; OCHRE charity (Scotland); OG Cancer NI (Northern Ireland); PCSG - Primary Care Society for Gastroenterology; UKBOR – UK Barrett's Oesophagus Registry

Medical Advisor to *Action Against Heartburn* – Dr Jason Dunn MB BS PhD MRCP BSc, St Thomas' hospital
Pharmaceutical Advisor: Ash Soni OBE

- Each pharmacy should be given one of our A4-size 'Note to Pharmacy Staff'. If they wish to consult their regional manager, please contact me if they would like to receive a more formal letter explaining our campaign.

Frequent customers for over-the-counter heartburn remedies will often benefit from visiting their GP to investigate underlying causes for their heartburn. If they have difficulty in swallowing, or persistent hiccups, they should see their GP without delay.

Please feel free to distribute the posters and leaflets to other public places like health centres, libraries, shopping centres, dental surgeries and GP surgeries. Use your judgement.

There is a pop-up banner available to support other awareness raising initiatives that you may become involved in together with hospital staff.

This campaign is for the month of February, but you can be completely flexible about how you go about this. It will not matter if the leaflets are distributed early. If you are able to keep an eye on the locations and top them up with leaflets on a longer term basis after February, that would be excellent. Please contact me for further supplies!

Thank you once again for your support for this important health campaign.

Alan Moss

Chairman, *Action Against Heartburn*

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