



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

www.actionagainstheartburn.org.uk



@ActionHeartburn

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

During 2024 we held three member meetings and two presentations (see below) on Zoom. We have made contributions to the activities of the Less Survivable Cancers Taskforce (LSCT) of which we were founding members, and to Cancer 52 which represents rare cancers. Our mailing list now includes almost 50 emailing addresses of campaigning organisations and individuals interested in defeating oesophageal cancer.

Research and Research Presentations

We have had two research presentations this year. The first was presented to us by Stefan Antonowicz FRCS, an Upper GI surgeon working with Prof. George Hanna at Imperial College who spoke to us about the research he has been doing into the effectiveness of chemotherapy after oesophageal cancer surgery. Stefan and his colleagues have devised a system of testing drugs on slices of oesophageal cancer tumour, which he hopes will lead to more individualised and more effective care. The objective is to increase the number of options open to oncologists. He subsequently asked us for a reference for his request for funding for the research, which we provided, and the funding was subsequently granted.

Our second presentation was given by Maddy Young PhD of the Welsh charity Tenovus, who, with the Less Survivable Cancer Taskforce, carried out a successful campaign against oesophageal and stomach cancer. The campaign was based on Maddy's report entitled "A Burning Issue". The presentation covered the main aspects of the campaign, including social media, stakeholder support and content marketing.



Capsule Sponge Technology

We also contributed to a Drop-In day held at the House of Commons by Cyted to promote Capsule Sponge Technology (previously Cytosponge) and subsequently attended a publicity photograph outside No 10 Downing Street.

Surveys and Questionnaires

During the year our members participated in a number of occasional online questionnaires to assist clinical research. Examples are the survey for identifying priorities in oesophageal cancer research run by Chris Peters at Cambridge, or the survey run by Health Technology Wales asking for people's experiences of capsule sponge technology.

National Oesophago-Gastric Cancer Audit (NOGCA) Patient Report www.nogca.org.uk

AAH contributes to the panel which produces the NOGCA Patient Report. The report is based on the main NOGCA Audit Report which is produced every year under the auspices of the Royal College of Surgeons, and which is an annual clinical audit of national oesophago-gastric cancer services in the NHS in England and Wales. The Patient Report is a shorter report designed specifically for a non-clinical audience. A number of online meetings were held during the year drafting the patient version of the main Audit Report and the draft was sent around our membership for input and commentary. The final edition was published in May and is available on the NOGCA website.

Less Survivable Cancer Taskforce (LSCT) www.lessurvivablecancers.org.uk

The LSCT, represents the “less survivable cancers” i.e those of the lung, liver, brain, oesophagus, pancreas and stomach, all with the lowest survival rates. They held another Awareness Day in January in which we played an active part, and which was again very successful and attracted national press coverage. We are hoping to emulate their Awareness events for our Oesophageal Cancer February Awareness Month 2025.

Cancer 52 www.cancer52.org.uk

AAH is a member and supporter of Cancer 52 which has over 100 members, and which campaigns for the 52% of cancers which are not the big four (breast, lung, prostate, bowel). We (and some of our own members) attend the regular online meetings that it holds on topical subjects. It also occasionally holds meetings in person such as its recent conference at Canary Wharf in June which we attended. Due to Cancer 52’s lottery win, AAH no longer has to pay a membership fee to Cancer 52 and we are grateful to it for this gesture.

Finance

Our financial position is in good shape. We are grateful to GUTS UK for allowing us to use their banking facilities for our funds at no charge. We have been fortunate in securing small donations occasionally from members of the public and from our supporters. Our main outgoings this year were membership fees to the LSCT, and payments for our website.

JMC 1/4/25