3 February 2020

World Cancer Day: *I am and I will. Taking positive action against cancer*

**Tuesday 4 February** is World Cancer Day, uniting us around the globe in the fight against cancer.

Every year 9.6 million people die from cancer worldwide; out of which, at least one third could have been prevented.

The theme of World Cancer Day is ‘I am and I will’. It explores how we can all show support, raise our collective voice and take personal action.

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) encourages the community to take personal action and make healthy lifestyle choices to reduce your risk of cancer.

SCHHS Staff Specialist in Medical Oncology, Dr Bryan Chan said just as cancer affected everyone in different ways, we all had the power to reduce our risk of many common cancers by maintaining a healthy weight, quitting smoking, moderating alcohol consumption and making physical activity part of our everyday lives.

“Being overweight or obese increases the risk of at least 10 cancers - bowel, breast, uterine, ovarian, pancreatic, oesophageal, kidney, liver, prostate and gallbladder cancers,” Dr Chan said.

“We can also choose to be tested and screened for those cancers where screening has been shown to be of benefit, like breast and bowel cancer.”

Dr Chan said diagnosing cancer wasn't always easy but increasing awareness of signs and symptoms and the importance of timely, appropriate treatment had been shown to improve survival rates and quality of life for those with cancer.

“Cancer treatment has significantly evolved and improved over time. We have so many new options to offer patients that were just a dream a decade ago,” he said.

SCHHS patient Ronald Bell can vouch first-hand for the benefits of some of these ground-breaking treatments.

“A year ago, our life was turned upside down when I was diagnosed with lung cancer.

“I was fortunate to be given a second chance at life by being able to receive immunotherapy rather than chemotherapy. This treatment uses my own immune system to fight off the cancer.
“I had no idea what to expect. When I received the terminal illness diagnosis it was all a blur. Now we get up in the morning and carry on with a normal day, we don’t think about the cancer. I’ve been very lucky,” Mr Bell said.

“I’m even back to playing tennis at club competition level. I’ve won an award at the tennis club – all while undergoing immunotherapy. We’ve also recently returned from two weeks cruising the Greek islands, which we had cancelled when I received my diagnosis.

“Days like World Cancer Day are important to encourage and inspire people, show them that there is hope due to continual new advancements in treatments. It is also important to shine a light on the wonderful support networks who are so important.

Mr Bell said: “My wife has been by my side the whole way through, I couldn’t have coped without her. We are also extremely lucky to have such amazing infrastructure here on the coast, I find it hard to believe I would have received better treatment anywhere in the world”.

An important part of Mr Bell’s support network at SCHHS is Cassandra Dickens, one of only two dedicated lung cancer specialist nurses in Queensland. She ensures that patients with lung cancer, like Mr Bell, are linked to the right specialists in a timely fashion. Cassandra supports patients and their families throughout their cancer journey.

Dr Chan said World Cancer Day is the perfect time for us to lock-in our regular screenings, be cognisant of early warning signs and champion healthy choices to prevent and reduce our cancer risk.

“We can all take positive action to reduce the burden of cancer. Sadly, it’s a disease that touches so many of us and our loved ones. Prevention is always better than cure,” he said.

For more information on World Cancer Day visit http://www.worldcancerday.org/

ENDS

Media contact: Alicia Temple | Alexia Kelly | 5202 0083 | 0408 713 747

Follow us!  

Facebook  
Twitter