

Abstract - Lynn Faulds Wood

How to raise awareness of colon cancer across Europe and get resources for national screening programmes?

Answer: target Members of national Parliaments and the European Parliament in Brussels, offering them an opportunity to experience screening – for if our politicians do not wish to be screened, why should their voters?

There is also the strong possibility that some Members of Parliament will be found to have early, treatable cancers and develop a keen understanding of why screening is so important. Politicians also control the purse strings – and health targets.

Screening programmes for colon cancer are not well developed in most European countries with fewer than half starting or piloting national population-based programmes. In Central and Eastern Europe there are strong cultural attitudes to be overcome - “cancer = despair and certain death” (Slovenian PR company slide 2006)

Lynn Faulds Wood, President of the European Cancer Patient Coalition, (a UK TV presenter & advanced colon cancer survivor), launched a campaign to offer an experience of screening to MEPs and national MPs across Europe. She was invited to launch screening programmes in Slovenia & Cyprus - Slovenia had already screened most of their MPs and found several early cancers.

In the UK the plan is highly ambitious - to park a mobile endoscopy truck within the precincts of Parliament and to offer flexible sigmoidoscopy from 55 to eligible members of the House of Commons and Lords. The plan is backed by the Royal College of Nursing, 20,000 of whose members will develop colon cancer in their lifetime. One aim is to increase training of endoscopy nurses – perhaps adding to the attraction of screening to mainly male Members of Parliament.

The initial launch of the programme brought forward MPs and Lords to say that they have had colon cancer/have it in their families and they are now assisting with the programme – the chief physician would like it to be a regular service offered to MPs.

In the European Parliament, where the Coalition runs the Secretariat for MEPs Against Cancer in the European Parliament, members of MAC have already started to be screened – with the ultimate aim to bring the mobile endoscopy truck to the Parliament in Brussels.

Lynn will outline the many difficulties along the way in encouraging MPs and MEPs to be screened.

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