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Secretary of State for Health
Department of Health
Richmond House
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London
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12th March 2010

For the attention of the Right Honourable Andy Burnam MP, Secretary of State for Health,

Re: Forgoing the Phase III Abiraterone Drug Trial to Extend the Lives of 8,000 men

Dear Mr Burnam,

I am writing to you as the Secretary of State for Health to use the powers you have at your disposal to instruct the cancellation of the Phase III Abiraterone Drug Trial and revert it back to an extended Phase II Drug Trial thus allowing men with advanced prostate cancer access to a drug that will reportedly extend their lives by approximately 6 months.

For your information, Abiraterone, hailed as a prostate cancer breakthrough drug, has received a lot of hype in the media recently about its capability to extend the life expectancy of men with advanced prostate cancer by as much as 6 months after all current hormone suppression treatments have failed. Unfortunately, the wonder drug will not be available until the Phase III trial is completed sometime next year after which a licence to market the drug is expected to be granted.

In the meantime, approximately 8,000 men who could benefit from the new drug will be deprived its use. Although Phase III drug trials are necessary, the trial for Abiraterone is different because it is being benchmarked against a steroid drug that already has a well documented performance history, which means that a benchmark for the drug already exists thus negating the need for a Phase III trial.

Forgoing the Phase III trial and reopening the Phase II trial (where men taking part are given the drug) until sufficient statistical evidence is collected to prove its reported performance against the benchmark steroid drug, will extend the lives of the men taking part in the trial.

As you know each year in the UK 35,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer and 10,000 die of the disease. Also, 23% (8,000+) are diagnosed with incurable advanced prostate cancer with 3,000+ dying within one year of being diagnosed. This means that between 8,000 and 10,000 men in one year (the time it is expected to take for Abiraterone to become licensed and available) could benefit from the new wonder drug.

Having read all the positive reports on Abiraterone and knowing that it will not be available to the men who need it now (not one year from now) disheartens me, especially as the most important human right is the right to life. Therefore, I once again urge you to use the powers you have at your disposal to instruct the cancellation of the Phase III Abiraterone Drug Trial and revert it back to an extended Phase II Drug Trial thus allowing men with advanced prostate cancer access to the drug and extend their lives by approximately 6 months.

Yours sincerely

Doug Gray (Mr)