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Help us to find out more about preventing breast cancer, say researchers

Researchers from the Withington Hospital, South Manchester University Hospitals Trust, announced today that **100** women from the area have joined a pioneering breast cancer prevention study but that many more are still needed. The study called IBIS-2 is supported by Cancer Research UK and has been ongoing in Manchester and throughout the UK since 2004.

IBIS-2 is the first worldwide study to investigate whether a breast cancer treatment drug called anastrozole can prevent the disease in postmenopausal women who are at higher risk of the disease. Previous research on anastrozole as a treatment for early stage breast cancer suggested that anastrozole might prevent 70-80% of hormone-receptor positive tumours in women at high risk of breast cancer. But to confirm whether it can work in prevention, a large trial with thousands of participants must be conducted.

Tony Howell, Professor of Cancer Prevention at the South Manchester University Hospitals Trust, said: "It is good news that so many women have come forward to take part in this trial but we still need another 500 to join at our hospital. So it is vital that women who think that they may be eligible continue to come forward. This study could provide them and future generations with a valuable option in helping us to prevent the disease."

The 100th woman to volunteer for the study at the hospital, Dorothy Connor, also joined researchers in encouraging more women from the Manchester area, who think that they might be eligible, to find out about joining the study. She first heard out about IBIS-2 while watching a local news programme announcing the start of the study in Manchester.

Dorothy said: "Having lost a sister to breast cancer and at the same time my daughter being treated for a very aggressive cancer, I felt that I had to help our family and others from having to go through this trauma. I hope this commitment from me will help to save thousands of lives.

"Taking part in IBIS-2 is a good way to keep a close eye on my health too and I would encourage other women who think that they might be eligible, to call the nurses at Cancer Research UK to find out more."

Any woman wanting to take part in IBIS-2 must have a higher than average chance of being diagnosed with breast cancer because of their family history or other risk factors, have passed the menopause, be aged between 40-70 and not receiving HRT. This includes women whose mother or sister had breast cancer or ovarian cancer at the age of 50 or under.

Half of the women on the trial will receive anastrozole; the other will receive a dummy pill (placebo). All of the women will receive a bone scan, a mammogram and the best available care.

Over 41,000 women in the UK are diagnosed with breast cancer every year. Around 80 per cent of these are post-menopausal women. Improvements have been made in recent years in the treatment of breast cancer, and more cancers are being diagnosed early through national screening programmes. But scientists still need to know more about how to prevent breast cancer.

Women can find out more about whether they are eligible to take part in the study by calling the Cancer Research UK Nurses on Tel 020 7061 8355. More information is also available on the IBIS-2 website www.ibis-trials.org or www.cancerhelp.org.uk.

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For interviews with Dorothy, please contact her directly on 01942 877690. For media enquiries and interviews with local spokespeople, please contact Rita Martins on 0207 014 0223.

Notes to Editors

- IBIS-2 is being supported by Cancer Research UK and sponsored by Queen Mary, University of London.
- IBIS-2 study centres currently open for recruitment in the North West are Royal Bolton Hospital, Royal Liverpool University Hospital, Macclesfield Hospital, Countess of Chester Hospital, Royal Oldham Hospital, and Hope Hospital in Salford.

IBIS-2 (International Breast cancer Intervention Study II)

- The IBIS-2 Prevention study aims to recruit 6,000 post-menopausal women who are at increased risk of developing breast cancer. A number of factors for increased risk can make a woman eligible to enter the study and these are set according to the different age groups. Women can take part in the study if they are aged between 40-70 years and are not on HRT. Women who have had breast cancer cannot enter this part of the study.
- The study is currently recruiting women and will run until 2008. So far over 700 women have joined the study worldwide.
- The IBIS-2 study is a randomised, blinded placebo controlled Phase III clinical study.

Anastrozole (trade name Arimidex)

- Anastrozole is one of a group of drugs called aromatase inhibitors. In post-menopausal women, an enzyme called aromatase is the main source of oestrogen. Aromatase inhibitors block the action of aromatase, reducing the levels of oestrogen in the body.
- In the UK, anastrozole is approved for use in the adjuvant treatment of postmenopausal women with hormone receptor positive early invasive breast cancer.
- Anastrozole is known to have some side effects which include hot flushes, vaginal dryness, hair thinning, joint pains and an increased risk of osteoporosis (weakened bones).