Cancer A Public Priority?

Contributed by Ipsos MORI
Thursday, 28 September 2006
Last Updated Thursday, 01 January 2009

September 24th 2006

Findings from an Ipsos MORI survey on behalf Cancerbackup are unambiguous in showing that cancer is a key public priority, both in absolute terms, and compared with other illnesses and diseases. Cancer has remained the top national health priority among the general public since 2003, and its importance as a health concern overshadows public concern for other illnesses and diseases. The question asked the public, without any prompting, which, if any, illness or diseases they think should be a national health priority.

Whilst health care issues are consistently at the forefront of people's minds, and have been for decades, there has recently been notable media coverage relating to disparities in the provision of life-prolonging drugs for cancer, so-called 'postcode prescribing' of cancer treatment drugs such as Herceptin, and reports of cancer therapy being denied to patients on the grounds of cost, which may or may not have influenced the survey findings.

In particular, this may have had an impact on the strong feeling found among the general public in relation to equity of health care â€” that everyone should be entitled to the same standard of cancer care regardless of: where they live, age, gender or socio-demographic factors.

Survey findings highlight a notable difference in perceptions between people diagnosed with cancer and the public in general, with people who have been diagnosed with cancer in the last five years, and therefore more likely to have experienced NHS cancer care first hand, rating the overall standard of care much higher and having greater confidence in their local hospital, their GP and the NHS with regard to cancer care.

Â