

WOMEN FIND FRIENDSHIP AND FUNDRAISING AIM VIA SUPPORT GROUP



■ United by their experience – Esther Edwards and Joan Wells fundraise for the Net Patient Foundation after meeting at one of the charity's support group meetings. Inset, Joan's husband Monty

Picture: STEVE O'CONNELL
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Neuroendocrine cancer

● Neuroendocrine tumours start in cells which help produce hormones, which in turn help control the levels of particular chemicals and fluids in the body. The tumours are most common in the digestive system, but can occur in other parts of the body. Symptoms include

diarrhoea, flushing of the skin and wheezing. ● About five people in every 100,000 are affected by neuroendocrine cancer in the UK, leading to 3,000 new cases each year ● The tumours can affect people of all ages and both sexes.

United by our experience of a rare cancer

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SUDDENLY finding out you or your partner is suffering from a rare type of cancer has to be one of life's most harrowing experiences.

Despite the pain, this scenario has led to friendship and a new-found dedication to fundraising for two women.

Joan Wells, 62, from Benfleet, and Esther Edwards, 68, from Thundersley, met at a support group in Castle Point run by the Net Patient Foundation, a charity dedicated to researching cures for rare neuroendocrine tumours.

The women have teamed up to hold table-top sales and boot sales in south Essex, to raise awareness for the charity and the unknown disease which has affected both their lives.

In just a few months they have raised more than £2,000.

Joan, of Northern Avenue, lost her husband, Monty, when he was 64. Doctors found a

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tumour the size of a rugby ball in his chest in 2007.

He had an operation to remove most of the tumour, but a small amount remained on his blood vessel which doctors were unable to operate on.

She said: “Although we had never really heard much about the cancer, the doctors were very positive and they were surprised at how large the tumour was.

“He had had indigestion problems for a while, and after a series of tests they realised what it was.

“Doctors said they were very surprised at how fit and well he was after the operation.

“He then started on a bout of chemotherapy and all was

going well until he caught pneumonia on holiday in Crete in 2009.

“He was in hospital for two days before he went into septic shock and died.”

Esther, of Raymonds Drive, was diagnosed in 2006, when tumours were found in her stomach, bowels and liver.

She said: “My tumours were quite small, and I have to go back to hospital every 28 days to have injections to keep them under control.”

Before she was diagnosed, Esther said she had had indigestion problems and kept going back to her doctor until she was sent for a scan.

She added: “Joan and I wanted to try and give something back to the foundation because they put a lot into having the meetings down here for us.

“We want to continue trying to raise awareness of this condition because it can take a long time to be diagnosed.”

Visit www.netpatientfoundation.org