

A MESSAGE FROM HIS MAJESTY THE KING

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My wife and I are delighted to host you here this evening to celebrate and above all thank those who so selflessly give care, comfort and reassurance to the 390,000 people who, sadly, receive a new cancer diagnosis across the U.K. each year. That is over 1,000 new cases every single day.

Each diagnosis, each new case, will be a daunting and at times frightening experience for those individuals and their loved ones. But as one among those statistics myself, I can vouch for the fact that it can also be an experience that brings into sharp focus the very best of humanity.

It has certainly given me an even deeper appreciation of the extraordinary work undertaken by the remarkable organisations and individuals gathered here this evening, many of whom I have known, visited and supported over the years. And it has reinforced what I have long observed during these visits - that the darkest moments of illness can be illuminated by the greatest compassion.

As Patrons of many such organisations, The Queen and I have seen at first-hand how you not only fund vital research and deliver exceptional healthcare but also create spaces where patients and their families find sanctuary, understanding and practical assistance when they need it most.

What strikes us repeatedly is the profound impact of human connection - whether in the careful explanation from a specialist nurse, the hand held by a hospice volunteer, or the shared experience in a support group. These moments of kinship create what I might call a "community of care", one that sustains patients through the most difficult of times.

So to all the researchers pursuing pioneering breakthroughs; to the healthcare professionals providing specialist treatment; to the volunteers offering comfort, or campaigning to raise awareness; and to the fundraisers enabling all this vital work - you have my whole family's deepest admiration and gratitude. Your commitment to early diagnosis, evermore successful therapies and truly holistic care represents the very best our country can offer.

This collective endeavour reminds us of what we can achieve when we are united with common purpose and uncommon determination. While every patient's journey may be different, together you are ensuring that a cancer diagnosis need never mean facing the future without hope and support.

And to those who may be receiving such upsetting news today, tomorrow or at any point in the future, I can only echo the departing words of the late Dame Deborah James, whose parents I am delighted to have with us here this evening, and whose example stands as an inspiration to us all, in sickness and in health: "Find a life worth enjoying; take risks; love deeply; have no regrets; and always, always have rebellious hope."

I am so very grateful for all that you do.

Charles R