The interests of cancer patients and research must be safeguarded as the UK leaves the EU. It is essential that we can work with international partners to drive forward our progress on improving outcomes for patients. We need to be able to continue to collaborate on vital cross-national clinical trials; to attract, recruit and retain global scientific talent at all levels; and ensure that patients across the UK and Europe have swift access to the most innovative treatments. Only by working together will we beat cancer.

Cancer is an accelerating global crisis in need of international solutions. The number of new cases worldwide is estimated to grow from 14.1m in 2012 to 23.6m in 2030. In the UK, one in two people will develop cancer at some point in their lives, and as more people benefit from longer life expectancy, the number of cancer cases is expected to rise.

Our ambition is to accelerate progress and see 3 in 4 people with cancer surviving the disease. Research is at the heart of our plan to reach this ambition and see cancers diagnosed early and treated well.

It’s in the best interest of all patients to keep UK science strong, collaborative and competitive. It’s crucial that cancer patients in the UK and Europe do not lose out from the UK’s exit from the EU and that vital research progress continues to be made.

“The UK’s cancer research community is poised more than ever before to play an international leadership role in cancer and I can testify that it welcomes anyone from anywhere who is interested in joining the mission to confine cancer to history”.
Professor Richard Gilbertson (Paediatric cancer specialist)

Collaboration is vital. More than a quarter of the trials that Cancer Research UK funds involve at least one other EU country.

Nearly 50% of all UK cancer research involves international research. In February 2017, Cancer Research UK researchers were partnering with over 400 different organisations based in EU countries.

Between 2004 and 2016 the UK collaborated on over 4,800 trials with at least one other EU country. Continued collaboration is vital to ensure patients get access to the most innovative treatments.

We work with the very best minds, regardless of nationality, to conduct the highest quality research. Half of our PhD students and 46% of our Fellows are not from the UK.

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THE NEW UK/EU RELATIONSHIP
GETTING THE BEST DEAL FOR PATIENTS AND RESEARCH

CLINICAL TRIALS
The UK is a global leader in clinical research, underpinned by our place at the centre of a web of international collaboration. It is vital we can continue to collaborate with EU partners on clinical trials, attracting industry investment and protecting patient access to innovative treatments – particularly important for rare and children’s cancers.

- We welcome the Government’s commitment to align as closely as possible with the forthcoming EU Clinical Trials Regulation (CTR).
- Now Government must prioritise negotiating access to the EU portal and database, infrastructure which underpins the CTR, as well as ensuring UK-based organisations can easily act as Sponsors of trials that include EU partners.

ACCESS TO DRUGS
The Government must protect swift access to life-saving cancer medicines for UK patients.

- Participation in the European Medicines Agency (EMA)’s centralised licensing process will ensure timely access to the newest drugs for UK patients, and will maintain the UK’s position as a priority launch market for pharmaceutical companies.
- We welcome plans to ensure current arrangements for medicines to access UK markets continue – Government must make this a negotiating priority.

PEOPLE
Researchers are at the heart of the breakthroughs that benefit cancer patients in the UK, in Europe and worldwide. We must ensure that we are able to attract, recruit and retain global scientific talent at all professional levels and collaborate with international partners.

- Assurances should continue to be provided on the rights of European Economic Area Citizens in the UK, and UK nationals in the EEA.
- Government must also protect the short-term mobility of researchers and scientists, and ensure this is reflected in the Immigration Bill.
- Government should send more positive and consistent messaging to the global research community, including those already based in the UK.

SCIENCE INVESTMENT
The UK should aim to grow its investment in science; strengthening the global standing of our research base. To achieve this aim, and build on the ambitions of the Industrial Strategy, it is vital that Government ensures participation in international funding programmes.

- The UK should build the prestige and global recognition of its research grants and consider how these could facilitate international collaborations and drive global research consortia.
- UK researchers should be encouraged to develop international collaborations and should have access to infrastructure and funding that supports these: for example through Horizon Europe, which will replace Horizon 2020. The UK should shape the future of such programmes to ensure they align with UK priorities and are awarded on scientific excellence.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?
We are working hard in Brussels and Westminster to ensure patients and research get the best deal. But we need your support.

For further information on our work, or a detailed policy briefing on any of these areas, please contact us at publicaffairs@cancer.org.uk

1 This is from internal data collected by our Research and Innovation Directorate, Cancer Research UK
2 https://www.ohre.org/publications/exploring-interdependencies-research-funders-uk
3 Based on data from Researchfish, a self-reporting tool for researchers, including those receiving funding from CRUK
5 Pancreatic Cancer Statistics – CRUK Website
6 CRUK trial shows improved 5 year survival for pancreatic cancer patients – CRUK Press Release (2016)

CASE STUDY
PAN-EU Pancreatic Cancer Trial
Pancreatic cancer is one of the hardest cancers to treat and has one of the lowest survival rates1. The European Study Group for Pancreatic Cancer (ESPAC) wants to change this. ESPAC formed in 1989, and have worked together successfully for 30 years, with research that has contributed to accelerated improvements in survival and quality of life for patients. Since the 1980s, short term survival has increased by around 60%.

Just 1% of people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in England and Wales survive for ten years or more. In the UK there are around 9,800 new cases of pancreatic cancer each year, and 8,800 deaths.

In 2008, they set up the ESPAC-4 clinical trial. By 2014, it had recruited 732 patients from the UK, Germany, Sweden, and France2. An extra 13% of patients on the trial lived for five years when given a combination of chemotherapy drugs. This brought five-year survival to almost a third, a huge result for patients. Using this combination of chemotherapy drugs after surgery is now standard of care for patients with operable pancreatic cancer and forms part of the NICE and ASCO guidelines. The ESPAC trials are a pan-EU collaboration. They are co-ordinated at the Cancer Research UK Liverpool Cancer Trials Unit while the Chair of the ESPAC group is from Heidelberg University and the team includes experts from all over Europe3.

But ESPAC know there is more to do. Their latest trial, ESPAC-5F, is currently recruiting patients as they seek to drive further improvements in survival and quality of life. It’s vital that groups like ESPAC are able to continue their potentially life-saving work after the UK leaves the EU to the benefit of patients across Europe.