

**E-mail from Rob Lester to Annabelle Ewing MSP  
regarding Access to New Cancer Drugs, sent on  
10<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

Dear Mrs Ewing

I am writing to ask you to urge the Scottish Government to improve access to innovative new treatments for people with cancer and, in particular, the drug Abiraterone (Zytiga) as first-line treatment for advanced prostate cancer.

The Institute of Cancer Research has produced a new report, 'From patent to patient – analysing access to innovative cancer drugs' which highlights the delays in getting effective new cancer drugs to people with cancer and suggests possible solutions. Here is a link to the report [icr.ac.uk/drugaccess](http://icr.ac.uk/drugaccess)

The report finds that:

- rapid advances in cancer research have driven a big increase in the number of treatments developed – but the average time for a drug to go from patent to NHS patient has increased by more than a year
- there are stark differences in the rate of developing new drugs for different tumour types – cancers of especially high unmet need are often not benefiting from the exciting advances seen in other tumour types
- for paediatric cancers, there are very few targeted drugs coming through at all – there is an urgent need to ensure children with cancer begin to benefit from advances in treatment in the same way as adult patients
- NICE and SMC need to do more to deliver the most innovative drugs to patients as they are no more

likely to approve a highly innovative drug for NHS use than a low-innovation drug.

My own story is that I retired six years ago as a General Practitioner in Dunfermline following a diagnosis of advanced prostate cancer and have received excellent care from hospitals in Fife and Edinburgh.

The new cancer drug that has been of enormous help to me is called Abiraterone (Zytiga) which I have been getting as first-line treatment through my participation in a clinical trial (The Stampede Trial) designed to test the effectiveness of new drug treatments for men with advanced prostate cancer.

As your constituent, I would be grateful if you could write to Jeane Freeman MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport and ask when Abiraterone will be available through the NHS as first-line treatment for men with life-threatening advanced prostate cancer.

Yours sincerely

Rob Lester