



## Working to beat breast cancer

Cancer Research UK is at the forefront of global efforts to tackle breast cancer. Last year alone we spent over £44 million on groundbreaking research into the disease. Our scientists across the UK are dedicated to understanding more about the causes of breast cancer, and investigating new ways to prevent, diagnose and treat the disease more effectively in the future.

### *IBIS-II: Preventing breast cancer, saving lives*

Professor Jack Cuzick is head of the internationally renowned Cancer Research UK Centre for Epidemiology, Mathematics and Statistics, part of Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry. The department is now recognised worldwide as one of the leading groups in its field. The group carries out a huge range of research on many different cancer types, and is concerned with cancer prevention and screening, especially for breast, cervical and bowel cancers.

Professor Cuzick is coordinating an international team of researchers who are running a large clinical trial called **IBIS-II**<sup>1</sup>. The aim of this study is to determine whether the drug anastrozole can prevent breast cancer in healthy post-menopausal women at high risk of the disease.

The team have previously shown that the drug tamoxifen, which is used very successfully in the treatment of breast cancer, can also help prevent the disease in women at high risk. The results showed conclusively that tamoxifen reduced breast cancer rates by 30 per cent amongst participants. However, use of this drug is associated with a very slight increase of womb cancer and blood clots.

Studies have suggested that anastrozole may be more effective at preventing the disease than tamoxifen, and have fewer side-effects. In order to test this, the team aims to recruit 8,000 post-menopausal women at high risk of breast cancer, either due to a family history or because they have had a pre-cancerous condition from more than **200 hospitals in 16 countries**, more than 50 of those hospitals are here in the UK. So far, over 5,500 women have been recruited to take part. Anastrozole has already been shown to be effective for the treatment of breast cancer, but this will be the first time it has been tested specifically as a preventative measure.

Around 30,000 post-menopausal women are diagnosed with breast cancer in the UK annually. Researchers believe that if this trial is successful, anastrozole could prevent several thousand cases of the disease each year.

Cancer Research UK has been contributing around £100,000 a year, since 2004, to this prevention trial. We are committed to continue this level of funding until at least 2015.

*Cancer Research UK is very grateful to Spider's Appeal for sponsoring breast cancer prevention research at Barts.*

---

<sup>1</sup> International Breast Cancer Intervention Study II