

# HEALTH REPORT

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## LOW AWARENESS AS COMMON CANCER INCIDENCE DOUBLES, NEW RESEARCH REVEALS

Authorities are warning Australians that their awareness of one of our most common cancers is not keeping pace with its incidence, which has doubled in the last 20 years.

Lymphoma is Australia's fifth-most common cancer, affecting more women than ovarian and cervical cancers and killing more Australians than melanoma<sup>1</sup>. Yet national figures released today by the Leukaemia Foundation in the Pfizer Australia Health Report reveal it's a misunderstood condition.

The Report finds that one-in-four Australians wrongly believe leukaemia affects more people than lymphoma and just over three-in-five confess they're not aware of the disease's impact.

Dr Anna Williamson, General Manager of Research, Advocacy and Patient Care at the Leukaemia Foundation says low awareness of lymphoma is at odds with projections that more than 4000 Australians will be diagnosed with lymphomas this year<sup>2</sup>.

"That's the equivalent of nearly 11 people per day developing a disease that gives little warning and often requires immediate, intensive and long-term treatment," Dr Williamson said.

"In addition, the incidence of lymphoma is climbing for reasons we can't explain and is expected to increase by around 30 percent between 2002- 2011."

Incidence of other blood cancers is also increasing with 2,869 Australians expected to be diagnosed with leukaemia and 1,917 with myeloma this year.

The research finds:

- o One in two Australians are unaware that just 50% of adults diagnosed with lymphoma will survive five years after diagnosis
- o Three-in-five Australians are unaware at what age they're most at risk of blood cancers, with less than 10 percent realising that it mostly affects people 60

<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2001 Cancer in Australia Report

<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Cancer Incidence Projections for Australian 2002 - 2011 (2005)



years and over. Blood cancers can develop in anyone at anytime, however, and there few clear causes or preventative measures;

- o Awareness of leukaemia is reasonably high with close to one-in-two Australians knowing someone who has had leukaemia but only one-in-four knowing someone who has been affected with lymphoma, even though there are almost twice as many cases of lymphoma than leukaemia in Australia every year.
- o Some 61 percent of Australians don't know that treatment for leukaemia and lymphoma is longer than other cancers. "On average the treatment lasts for eight months but can last for years," Dr Williamson said. "In reality, often treatment means leaving work, school, family commitments and friends as well as dealing with the emotional turmoil of diagnosis and immediate treatment."
- o Seven-in-10 Australians either believe that leukaemia affects more children than adults or don't know, when in actual fact 90 percent of cases are in adults.

The Leukaemia Foundation is the only national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the care and cure of patients and families living with leukaemias, lymphomas, myeloma and related blood diseases.

The Leukaemia Foundation provides free personalised care and support to patients, families and their carers living with leukaemias, lymphomas, myeloma and related blood disorders and funds cutting edge research into better treatments and cures through its National Research Program.

The Leukaemia Foundation has collaborated with Pfizer Australia to assist with educating the public about leukaemia, lymphomas and myeloma to produce this month's edition of the Pfizer Australia Health Report. Filled with useful information, free copies can be requested by phoning **1800 675 229** or by visiting [www.healthreport.com.au](http://www.healthreport.com.au) where people can also sign-up for email alerts of future editions.

The findings are based on responses from 1,405 Australians aged 18 years and over. The research was conducted in 2006 by independent consultants Stollznow Research.

Pfizer Australia is the nation's leading research-based health care company, investing over \$A42m in local research and development annually. It discovers, develops, manufactures and markets innovative medical treatments for both humans and animals. For more information, visit [www.pfizer.com.au](http://www.pfizer.com.au) or [www.leukaemia.org.au](http://www.leukaemia.org.au)

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**NB: INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE WITH LEUKAEMIA FOUNDATION SPOKESPERSON DR ANNA WILLIAMSON, GENERAL MANAGER RESEARCH, ADVOCACY AND PATIENT CARE**

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