

# Consortium will research, advise on cervical cancer

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The family of a young woman who died of breast cancer received a telephone call from one of her doctors eight weeks later to see when would she be attending for further treatment.

The incident was highlighted yesterday by the dead woman's sister, Hilary Coffey-Farrell, from Kimmage, Dublin, to emphasise the importance of regular communication between all members of multidisciplinary teams involved in cancer care.

Ms Coffey-Farrell, who herself has survived cervical cancer, said her own care had been fantastic and her doctors were always in touch with each other. But this was not always the case. She cited as an example the fact that, about eight weeks after her sister Anna McMurrough died, a doctor telephoned to see when she was going to be attending for another course of treatment. The family were aghast. Her 12-year-old son had answered the phone.

"Doctors are doing a great job. They just need to ensure that communication channels are open and working," she said.

Ms Coffey-Farrell was speaking at the launch in Dublin of an Irish Cervical Screening Research Consortium called Cerviva.

The consortium involves researchers at seven Irish universities, eight hospitals and 10 commercial diagnostic/biotechnology companies, all working together to instigate and advance high-quality peer-reviewed research programmes that provide the best information on the delivery of cervical screening to women in the Republic.

They will be involved in research projects looking at prevalence rates, for example, in the Irish population of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) which causes most cases of cervical cancer; the attitude of Irish people to cervical screening and HPV testing; a cost/benefit analysis of automated versus manual examinations of smear tests; and the effect of introducing a cervical cancer vaccine in the Irish population and whether it should be given to men, who harbour and transmit HPV.

The consortium has received €1.25 million from the Health Research Board.

Cervical cancer is the second most-common cancer among women worldwide and the consortium wants to make women more aware of its causes and how it can be prevented. The National Cancer Registry estimates there are up to 200 new cases of cervical cancer in the Republic every year. There are also about 70 deaths.

