

Medical Detection Dogs

In the UK one in two people will be diagnosed with some form of cancer during their lifetime. Early detection rates in the UK are the worst in Europe. There is no question that early detection and diagnoses of cancer and other diseases can lead to, earlier treatment and increased survival rates.

Medical Detection Dogs is a charity at the forefront of medical research. It aims to transform disease detection by harnessing the olfactory power of dogs to develop tests for a range of life threatening conditions including cancer. The charity's ground-breaking work is already saving lives by providing a reliable, practical, affordable solution to one of the greatest medical challenges today.

Medical Detection Dogs was co-founded in 2008 by a group including Claire Guest, a behavioural psychologist and Dr John Church, former orthopaedic surgeon. Claire and John were convinced dogs could be trained to detect the odour of human cancer and other diseases.

In 2004, Medical Detection Dogs contributed to the first ever scientific investigation into the detection of bladder cancer using dogs to screen urine samples published by the British Medical Journal. By 2011, Medical Detection Dogs had made significant progress developing the training technique with a further study published by the Cancer Biomarkers journal.

Since then Medical Detection Dogs has reached 93 per cent reliability in training trials for prostate cancer detection.

The charity is currently running a major trial in co-ordination with Milton Keynes University Hospital into the detection of prostate, bladder and kidney cancer using urine samples. It is also collaborating on a trial with the University of Manchester into the detection of Parkinson's and with the University of Durham into the detection of malaria.

Since 2008 Medical Detection Dogs has also trained alert assistance dogs for people with life threatening conditions, giving them greater independence and improving their lives immeasurably. In most cases, the medical alert assistance dogs help people suffering from brittle type 1 diabetes, who get no warning signs when a hypoglycaemic or hyperglycaemic attack is about to occur. The dogs are trained to detect changes in their partner's blood sugar levels and alert them to take insulin or eat sugar.

Dr Claire Guest, CEO and director of operations at Medical Detection Dogs, commented, "For hundreds of years, dogs have guarded us, rescued us when we're lost and provided unparalleled emotional support. Is it so hard to believe that they can detect the odour of human disease?"

"Dogs have an extraordinary sense of smell. They can detect parts per trillion; that's the equivalent of one drop of sugar in two Olympic-sized swimming pools.

"Our work is making exciting progress. If we can keep the kind donations from members of the public coming to fund our research, I feel confident our dogs have the potential to save thousands of lives, here in Britain and eventually round the world."

