Fighting Cancer by Supporting Charities

by ALISON RICHARDS

Raising Awareness Through Cancer Charities

Charities play a major role in the world of cancer. They help provide funding for ground-breaking research and provide support for patients during their diagnosis, treatment, and beyond. Many medical breakthroughs were made as a result of donations to cancer charities, from not only discovering new treatments, but also researching the cause of cancer and raising awareness to help prevent it in the first place.

The statistics surrounding cancer are shocking, with the most recent figures indicating that half of us will get cancer at some point in our lives. However, caught early and with the right treatment many of us go on to survive into old age. That's my aim, anyway, two years on from my breast cancer diagnosis, and hopefully 'cured.' I might not be here now though if it wasn't for the treatments, nursing support, and information I received directly or indirectly from charities, and for that I'm truly grateful.

Learning About Different Cancer Charities

There are so many cancer charities, from major national organizations that cover different types of cancer to tiny, local ones that focus on a specific type of cancer or age group.

American Cancer Society

In the US, the American Cancer Society is the biggest organization and was founded over 100 years ago. It provides support, research, funds, care for the underinsured, and helps fight for legislation, all while working hard on prevention programs.

They were also pivotal in highlighting the connection between cigarettes and cancer in the 1960s and laid the ground for the measures taken today to control the sale of tobacco, which has saved millions of lives.

Cancer Research Institute

In the UK, the Cancer Research Institute raises money to fund research projects so that scientists, doctors, and nurses can find new treatments, support patients better, and help prevent more cases from developing.

They provide information for government decision makers to improve cancer policy and support for the whole population. They also produce leaflets, posters and newsletters to help people understand cancer better, and provide other information that helps people take preventative measures.

MacMillan Cancer Support

I can't write about cancer charities without mentioning MacMillan Cancer Support. In the UK, MacMillan nurses are the backbone of the support team when you receive a cancer diagnosis. For me, meeting my 'MacMillan

nurse' was an emotional moment as it really brought it home that I actually had cancer.

These nurses are trained by the MacMillan charity who help provide physical, emotional, and financial support for all cancer patients. MacMillan coffee mornings are a national institution, offering a cup of coffee and a cake for a small donation, all of which add up to provide vital funds for this unbelievably worthwhile organization.

Charities Working with Specific Types of Cancer

There are also many thousands of smaller organizations who target a specific demographic. Maybe it's a particular type of cancer, age group, or ethnicity.

For breast cancer, the biggest US charity is the National Breast Cancer Foundation which offers help and inspires help for anyone with a diagnosis. They have a free mammography program, supply 'Hope Kits' which contain items which will be useful for someone going through breast cancer, fund research and education programs, and provide workplace information for employers supporting employees going through treatment.

Breast Cancer Now is the biggest UK breast cancer charity which provides support, publications, information and many other services. It funds research studies into areas such as male breast cancer, an ongoing study following 113,000 women over 40 years and a tissue bank which provides samples from people with and without breast cancer to be used by scientists.

Fundraising for Cancer Charities

Cancer charities are always desperate for donations to continue their vital work. You will be able to donate directly on their websites, but there are also many other ways of raising money.

Most of the big marathon races—including New York, Boston, and London—have entries available for people who don't meet the strict race criteria for their running times. All they have to do is raise money for charity (usually at least $5,000 but sometimes much more), to receive an entry place. It might seem like hard work but to take part in such an iconic event is a fantastic experience and for a non-profit to benefit too it makes it really worthwhile. Here is a link to the Boston Marathon charity page which includes a number of cancer charities.

Fundraising can take place on a smaller scale too, and it's easy to set up an individual challenge using a platform like JustGiving. You create a profile, explain what you are going to do, and then share details with your friends and social media channels so that they can donate easily online. Whether you're jumping out of a plane, holding a cake sale, or doing a sponsored swim, the efforts of an individual can make a massive difference in helping raise money for charity.

Donating a Car

One way of raising money for cancer charities is to donate your car, and there are organizations who can make all the arrangements for you. This is a tax efficient way of raising money for a good cause and saves you the hassle of trying to sell your old car when you need an upgrade.

One example of a website for this type of donation is Car Easy, which allows you to choose one of 3,500 non-profits to benefit from the proceeds. They collect the car, arrange for it to be sold (usually via an auction) and then send you a thank you letter along with the tax receipt and forms.

In the UK there is Charity Car, which does the same thing, and it doesn't matter what condition your car is in, because the charity will receive 100% of the scrap value if it's at the end of the road.

Raising Awareness

Raising awareness about cancer really helps with prevention as well as raising donations for charity. Sharing things on social media and writing blogs like mine where people talk about their own personal experiences are

great ways of increasing awareness.

Using influencers and celebrities is another way of ensuring that the message reaches a lot of people.

Impact of COVID-19 on Charity Donations

Unfortunately, many charities have had their usual donations decimated by the impact of COVID-19. It is estimated that some are losing nearly half of their usual income, equating to billions of dollars.

The work of cancer charities is so vital, now more than ever, to remind people that cancer doesn’t stop just because the world is in the grip of a pandemic. People must still report any symptoms to their doctor, should still check themselves regularly, and continue donating to charity if their financial situation allows them to do so.

We can’t afford to take our eyes off the ball now, not after so much hard work has been made into reducing worldwide cancer death rates.