

Red tape hindering cancer research, says report

By Rebecca Smith
Medical Editor

BUREAUCRACY and red tape is hindering cancer research in the UK, a Europe-wide report has shown.

Despite spending more money than any other European country on researching cancer, the UK carries out proportionately fewer studies and publishes fewer papers.

The UK spent an estimated €13.18 (£9.15) per person on cancer research in 2004 from charities and the Government combined.

The UK accounts for more than nine per cent of research

‘Insane to create an environment that sucks money away’

papers published in Europe and America, close to Germany at 9.6 per cent. America accounts for 48 per cent of papers published.

However, the UK invested

more than twice as much money in cancer research as Germany – €783 million (£543 million), compared to €324 million (£224 million) in Germany.

The report, *Investment and Outputs of Cancer Research: from the Public Sector to Industry*, was presented in Brussels yesterday and is the first time a measure of research productivity has been included.

Co-author Dr Richard Sullivan, who is also head of Clinical Programmes at Cancer Research UK, said the report shows that countries with a light regulatory touch, such as Sweden and the Netherlands, produce more research for less money.

The number of research papers published per billion euros of gross domestic product is higher in Sweden, Greece, Netherlands, Finland, Turkey, Austria and others than it is in the UK because of regulation, Dr Sullivan said.

“We have fabulous researchers in the UK and it is insane to go off and create an environment that sucks money away from research in bureaucracy.

“This is a really hard wake-up call for policy makers. Regulation might seem like a good idea but the impact can be huge,” he said.

The UK has invested enormous sums of money in cancer research, both through charities and by Government, since the early 2000s, Dr Sullivan said, and mortality rates from the disease have dropped.

He said this is yet to be translated into better survival figures because that is calculated five years from diagnosis and so the effect of better treatment takes longer to show up.

Between 1996 and 2005 mortality rates for all cancers combined fell by 12 per cent.

Dr Sullivan said more research needs to be focused towards holistic, non-drug treatments, diagnostic tests and support for cancer patients.

