

FACTFILE

● Thyroid Cancer is rare, but numbers are rising. Currently, this stands at approximately 2,100 new cases in the UK each year.

● Thyroid Cancer is more prevalent in women than men, at a ratio of 2 to 1.

● Prognosis for patients with differentiated Thyroid Cancer is excellent, with an 80-90% cure rate.

Signs and symptoms of thyroid cancer:

● A painless lump/swelling in the neck which increases in size

● Difficulty swallowing

● Difficulty breathing

● Painless hoarse voice

● In some cases there are no symptoms at all and thyroid cancer may be found incidentally when someone has a scan for another condition.

From <<21

kill off any remaining thyroid cells left behind after surgery. Kate was kept in isolation and treated with a dose of radioactive iodine. This meant family could only visit for half an hour at a time and they couldn't enter the room.

Thyroid cancer is rare, but numbers are rising and there are around 2,100 new cases in the UK each year. The disease is more prevalent in women than men, at a ratio of 2 to 1, however prognosis for patients with differentiated thyroid cancer is excellent, with an 80-90% cure rate.

Breaking the news to her son Daniel, aged 13 at the time, and her elderly, ill parents, proved heartbreaking. Kate said: "The automatic thing that you do is to protect people that you love. You just don't want to hurt them with the news, but you have to tell them. "Having to tell your own child you have cancer. That's one of the hardest things I've ever had to do."

Around a year later, just when Kate was getting back on her feet, she suffered a second blow. She was diagnosed with malignant melanoma-skin cancer on her foot. Thankfully it was caught in time and again she was given the all clear.

Kate, who now relies on synthetic hormones, felt so strongly about the lack of information for thyroid cancer patients, she decided to do something about it.

She said: "I was thinking there's a lot that could be done to make it easier on people. There was no written information given, no patient support group or organisation, and no decent website you could look at. "I started having meetings with the doctors and hospital management



PROUD OF EACH OTHER Kate and her son Daniel pictured after running the Great North Run in aid of Butterfly Thyroid Cancer Trust

and they were all fantastic. My surgeon had to diagnose a 24-year-old girl with the disease. He rang me up and asked if I would talk to her about what I'd been through. That is how it started. Just me talking to one other patient."

One patient soon turned into hundreds. Kate gave her job up at Steven's dental surgery and set up a helpline in her study thanks to a £3,000 grant from Charlie Bear.

Patients who had just been diagnosed with thyroid cancer, worried about results, or just wanted to talk to somebody who'd been there, could call Kate.

With help from the doctors at Newcastle General hospital, she set up the UK's first ever thyroid cancer website. Kate launched the Butterfly North East charity nine years ago. However patients from across the whole of the UK wanted to use the service too, so the charity became the Butterfly Thyroid Cancer Trust six years ago.

Kate has been instrumental in changing the face of how thyroid cancer patients are treated here in the North East.

She said: "It's really helped me in my own recovery. A big part of my

work is that I actually volunteer in the thyroid cancer clinic at the Freeman hospital. I'm the only patient in the UK who does that. "Patients see the doctors and they will say, we've got somebody in clinic whose had exactly the same as you, she's cured, do you want to meet her? Nearly all of them say yes.

"They always look at my neck and say you had what I had and you're better? I say yes, I'm cured, and you can just see the look of relief on their faces. It's the best medicine that anybody can get.

"A lot of people say you're cured. Why not walk away? However it's an uplifting thing and I'm very privileged to do it."

Last year the Butterfly Thyroid Cancer Trust held its first thyroid cancer awareness event at Gateshead Metrocentre. Twelve thyroid experts gave as many as 1,000 people a free neck check and two cancers were detected thanks to the event.

This year, the charity has produced the first ever thyroid cancer patient information DVD, which will be given to everyone diagnosed.

Despite the success of the charity, Kate and her family was struck down by more bad news in 2010. Steven,

now 52, was diagnosed with a benign brain tumour. The couple, who met when Kate visited Steven's practice because of a painful wisdom tooth, have supported each other throughout.

"It's been hard as illness does change people. The tumour has been removed and he's doing great. We love each other as much now as when we first met and have stuck together through it all. We've been married 25 years in November and are going away for a very special break as I think we deserve it."

It's no surprise then that Kate has been nominated for the national Inspiration Awards for Women on October 3 in London.

She said: "I knew nothing about it. Apparently one of the leading thyroid cancer doctors nominated me. I was absolutely overjoyed.

"It's down to public vote. I want to win this award for the North East. This is where this charity started by a normal Geordie girl and I want to get some recognition for this rare cancer."



INFO

● For information about Thyroid Cancer contact Butterfly Thyroid Cancer Trust tel: 01207 545469 email: enquiries@butterfly.org.uk or visit www.butterfly.org.uk

● To vote for Kate in the Most Aspirational category of the Inspiration Awards for Women visit www.inspirationawards.com



SAVING LIVES The Butterfly Thyroid Cancer Trust's very first Neck Check event in 2011 at Metrocentre, Gateshead. Kate with husband Steven and son Daniel at the event

