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**LOCAL NURSES LAUNCH 1,000 BALLOONS FOR CANCER AWARENESS WEEK**

The fifth annual Gynaecological Cancer Awareness week launches on 18 September with balloon releases in Manchester and Preston.

The initiative, brainchild of specialist nurses from across the region, urges women to “be aware of what’s down there”. Under its new name, the ‘Venus Appeal’, the campaign is going beyond its local roots for the first time in 2006.

To mark the beginning of the week, 1,000 balloons will be launched at 1pm on 18 September 2006, in Albert Square, Manchester, and simultaneously in the Flag Market, Preston. An event will also be held in Liverpool, with other activities taking place across the region, and more widely across the country, throughout the week.

Each year, some 17,000 women are diagnosed with one of the four main gynaecological cancers; ovarian, cervical, endometrial (womb) and vulval. Many of these women would have a much higher chance of successful treatment if they were diagnosed and treated at an earlier stage. The Venus Appeal awareness week lets women know what the possible symptoms of these cancers are, and encourages them to seek advice and visit their local GP if they have any concerns.

Spokesperson for the Venus Appeal, Karen Donnelly, Gynaecological Cancer Nurse Specialist at St Mary's Hospital, Manchester said: “Our bodies below the belt are a no-go area. As a society we don't want to discuss

gynaecological problems, which is such a tragedy. Women are dying every day because of this silence.

“The Venus Appeal wants to help women get to know their bodies and be familiar with the symptoms of gynaecological cancer. We want women to know when something is wrong and have the confidence to go to their GP or Well Woman clinic straight away to talk about their concerns.”

This year, the Venus Appeal, which is in the process of becoming a charity, is also working with doctors and nurses across the country to reach as many women as possible. A newly-launched website – [www.venusappeal.org](http://www.venusappeal.org) - will provide further information about how to spot potential symptoms, together with guidance about what to do and what will happen when women see their GP. Leaflets will be available at GP’s surgeries, local pharmacies, and at public events. Colourful Venus Appeal pin badges will also be for sale at the events.

Venus Appeal  
*Gynaecological Cancer Awareness*  
PO Box 344, Bolton BL1 9FP  
[www.venusappeal.org](http://www.venusappeal.org)

*Awaiting charitable status approval*

## NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. For the four most common gynaecological cancers, the latest available figures for incidence (Cancer Research UK 2002) and mortality (Cancer Research UK 2004) are:

<b>Cancer type</b>	<b>Incidence</b>	<b>Deaths</b>
Ovarian	6,959	4,434
Endometrial	5,965	1,592
Cervical	2,841	1,093
Vulval*	996	364
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,761</b>	<b>7,483</b>

\* Latest available data from 2000.

2. Information for women concerned about these cancers can be obtained from [www.venusappeal.org](http://www.venusappeal.org), or in a leaflet obtainable from any GP or Well Woman clinic, and most pharmacies, within the North West.

3. The Venus Appeal is a group of people including gynaecology cancer clinical nurse specialists, medical consultants, research consultants, women affected by gynaecological cancer, and their representatives. The aim is to work together to raise awareness of these types of cancer by breaking the taboo and embarrassment that often surrounds them, talking openly about the signs and symptoms, helping women learn more about their bodies, and to understand the benefits of early treatment.

4. The Venus Appeal is awaiting charitable status approval. The Appeal is supported by the Cancer Networks covering Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Lancashire, Merseyside and Cumbria, and the hospitals delivering gynaecological cancer services across the region.

5. For further press information and to arrange interviews with any of the nurses leading the Appeal, or women affected, contact John Joshua (0161 237 2617 or mob: 07876 747 751), or [john.joshua@manchester.nhs.uk](mailto:john.joshua@manchester.nhs.uk).