PRESS RELEASE
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When HPV Changed Our Lives: A Family's Fight Against Throat Cancer

London – 14th April 2025 – In the midst of the 2020 lockdown, Rachel and Martin Hatchett's world was turned upside down. What began as an ordinary year quickly became life-altering when Martin was diagnosed with throat cancer. The cause? Not COVID-19, as many might assume from that time — but HPV: the human papillomavirus.

"We were floored," Rachel shares. "It came completely out of the blue. We had no idea a virus like HPV could lead to something as serious as cancer."

Like many, the couple had never heard that HPV — a virus so common that most adults will contract it at some point — could cause cancer. For most, it's harmless and clears without issue. But in some cases, it remains in the body undetected for decades, potentially leading to cancers such as the one Martin developed.

"There were no warning signs," Rachel says. "No symptoms until it was too late."

Finding Help in Crisis

Facing an overwhelming diagnosis with little understanding of what lay ahead, Rachel and Martin turned to the Throat Cancer Foundation. The charity became a vital source of support and information during the most uncertain time of their lives.

"The Foundation not only helped us navigate the medical maze," Rachel says, "but they also opened our eyes to something we wish we'd known sooner: HPV-related cancers are preventable."

The Power of Prevention

HPV vaccination, available to both boys and girls before exposure to the virus, can significantly reduce the risk of developing certain cancers later in life — including throat cancer. But awareness remains shockingly low.

"We'd never even heard of the vaccine before Martin's diagnosis," Rachel admits. "Now, we want every parent, every partner, every family to know this is something you can protect your children against."

A Call to Action

Rachel and Martin are now committed to raising awareness about HPV and the importance of early vaccination. With the support of the Throat Cancer Foundation, they are turning their pain into purpose.

“We wish we had known sooner — we truly do,” Rachel says. “If there’s one thing, we want people to take away from our story, it’s this: talk about HPV. Learn about it. And if you can, vaccinate your children. It could save their lives.”

Gordon Dow, Trustee of the Throat Cancer Foundation, said, “Rachel and Martin’s story is tragically familiar to us. Far too many people are unaware that HPV can cause throat cancer, and the lack of awareness is costing lives. Their courage in speaking out highlights the urgent need for education and prevention. HPV vaccination is safe, effective, and available — but the message isn’t reaching everyone it should. We’re incredibly grateful to Rachel and Martin for helping shine a light on this issue and giving a voice to so many families affected by this silent epidemic.”

The Throat Cancer Foundation continues to support families like Rachel and Martin’s, offering guidance, advocacy, and a voice for those affected by HPV-related cancers.

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Editor’s Notes: About – Throat Cancer Foundation:

Founded in 2012 by oropharyngeal cancer survivor Jamie Rae, the Throat Cancer Foundation is dedicated to reducing the impact of throat cancers on individuals and society. Following his own treatment and recovery, Jamie recognised the urgent need for better resources and support for those affected by throat cancers. He established the charity to provide essential information, guidance, and reassurance for patients, their families, and loved ones.

The foundation is committed to ensuring that everyone affected by throat cancer has access to the most up-to-date information regarding diagnosis, treatment options, and recovery. It works closely with a team of leading world class cancer experts and medical professionals specialising in head and neck cancers to drive advancements in care and awareness.

Additionally, the Throat Cancer Foundation is a founding member of HPV Action, a coalition of 50 patient and professional organizations working collaboratively to reduce the health burden of HPV-related cancers. Through advocacy, education, and research funding, the foundation strives to improve early detection, enhance treatment options, and support those navigating the challenges of throat cancer.