

**For Immediate release**  
**Date: Wednesday June 13 2007**  
**Pictures supplied**

## BRISTOL SURGEONS BUILD FLOATING OPERATING THEATRE

TWO Bristol surgeons will be getting to grips with a different kind of operation when they launch the country's first floating operating theatre to raise awareness of skin cancer.

The unconventional craft will be designed and built by plastic surgeon Alex Vary and his colleague Victoria Bills, who are on a mission to raise £50,000 for Cancer Research UK and the Skin Cancer Research Fund.

The Sailing Surgeons will set sail from Bristol Harbourside on July 3<sup>rd</sup> and will arrive in London via the Henley Regatta a week later.

The eye-catching craft will have an operating theatre, complete with a larger than life 'dangerous mole' to highlight what skin changes to look out for and the importance of early detection.

Alex, who is based at Frenchay Hospital, explained: "As a trainee plastic surgeon it's worrying to be removing skin cancers from teenagers through to the elderly on a weekly basis.

"Through this challenge we hope to make more people aware of the real danger of spending too much time in the sun.

"The UK now has more deaths per year from skin cancer than Australia. There are 75,000 new cases of skin cancer registered each year in the UK and around 2,300 people die from the disease annually.

With skin cancer rates set to treble over the next twenty years there is a greater need than ever for people to be SunSmart.

Victoria added: "The good news is that the majority of skin cancers can be prevented by being SunSmart. People should understand their skin type and look out for the UV Index to know when to protect themselves.

Sunburn can double your risk of skin cancer, so we would encourage people to spend time in the shade when the sun is at its peak, make sure they never burn, aim to cover up with a t-shirt, hat and sunglasses and remember to use factor 15+ sunscreen, applying it generously and often."

Alexis Bayley, Area Volunteer Manager with Cancer Research UK is helping the Sailing Surgeons with their challenge.

“Alex and Victoria have set themselves a tough but rewarding challenge and we are thankful to them for raising both awareness and funds for Cancer Research UK.

“They are backing our SunSmart campaign as skin cancer is one of the UK’s most common cancers. It’s very important to know the signs and to take any change in a mole, freckle or normal patch of skin that occurs quickly, over weeks or months, seriously.”

The Sailing Surgeons are seeking sponsorship and prizes to auction through their website [www.sailingsurgeons.co.uk](http://www.sailingsurgeons.co.uk). The website includes a progress blog, donations link and description of their boat.

Ends

**For further information, please contact: Alison Birkett, Senior Press Officer with Cancer Research UK on 01454 454809 or 07918653002. or [Alison.birkett@cancer.org.uk](mailto:Alison.birkett@cancer.org.uk)** Find out more at [www.sunsmart.org.uk](http://www.sunsmart.org.uk)

### **The SunSmart Messages:**

**S**pend time in the shade between 11 and 3. The summer sun is most damaging to your skin in the middle of the day.

**M**ake sure you never burn; sunburn can double your risk of skin cancer.

**A**im to cover up with a t-shirt, hat and sunglasses. When the sun is at its peak sunscreen is not enough.

**R**emember to take extra care with children. Young skin is delicate. Keep babies out of the sun especially around midday.

**T**hen use factor 15+ sunscreen  
Apply sunscreen generously and reapply often.

....Also report mole changes or unusual skin growths promptly to your doctor.

Find out more at [www.sunsmart.org.uk](http://www.sunsmart.org.uk)

SunSmart is the UK’s national skin cancer prevention campaign commissioned by the UK Health Departments and run by Cancer Research UK. The campaign focuses on those most at risk of skin cancer and the key target audience this year is holidaymakers.

### **Skin cancer statistics:**

- Skin cancer is one of the most common cancers in the UK.
- The number of skin cancer cases is increasing year on year. The main risk factor for skin cancer is exposure to sunlight. Up to 90% of skin cancers could be prevented by being SunSmart.
- Over 75,000 new cases of skin cancer are registered each year in the UK. Some experts estimate the number of cases to be in excess of 100,000 as many cases are not reported.
- Each year over 1,800 people die from malignant melanoma.
- Cases of malignant melanoma have more than doubled over the past 20 years. Malignant melanoma is the second most common cancer for 20-39 year olds.
- Over the last 20 years, malignant melanoma incidence has increased faster than any other cancer.
- There are more skin cancer deaths in the UK than in Australia, even though Australia has more cases of the disease.

ENDS

For further information, please contact: Alison Birkett, Senior Press Officer with Cancer Research UK on 01454 454809 or 07918653002. or [Alison.birkett@cancer.org.uk](mailto:Alison.birkett@cancer.org.uk)

### NOTES TO EDITORS

#### About Cancer Research UK

- Together with its partners and supporters, Cancer Research UK's vision is to beat cancer.
- Cancer Research UK carries out world-class research to improve understanding of the disease and find out how to prevent, diagnose and treat different kinds of cancer.
- Cancer Research UK ensures that its findings are used to improve the lives of all cancer patients.
- Cancer Research UK helps people to understand cancer, the progress that is being made and the choices each person can make.
- Cancer Research UK works in partnership with others to achieve the greatest impact in the global fight against cancer.

For further information about Cancer Research UK's work or to find out how to support the charity, please call 08701 602040 or visit [www.cancerresearchuk.org.uk](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org.uk).