

'DON'T CRY FOR ME ARGENTINA'

Maria Eva Duarte was born in a small rural village in Argentina and brought up in an impoverished community. Looking for a better life she moved to Buenos Aires as a teenager. At a charity event for victims of an earthquake held in January 1944, she met Colonel Juan Peron - later to become the Country's President. They married the following year and, between 1946 and her death at 33 years of age in 1952, she was Argentina's 'First Lady', campaigning fervently for the rights of the under-privileged. In the 70s the hit musical 'Evita' was produced based around her life.



January was Cervical Cancer Awareness month, the condition which led to the death of Eva. She was not unique in having Cervical Cancer so young as, even today, it is the commonest cancer in women under 35. The early symptoms - which include abnormal vaginal bleeding, particularly during or after sex; pain or discomfort during sex; an unpleasant discharge - may have deterred her from seeking early medical help through embarrassment at having to see a member of the male dominated medical profession about her woman's 'problems'.

Cervical Cancer has led the way in a number of areas of Cancer care. Screening for the disease was introduced over half a century ago, well before that for Breast and Bowel Cancer – producing a 24% reduction in deaths from the disease over the following decades. It is also the first tumour for which a preventative vaccine has been developed. Girls at secondary schools on the Island, aged 12 or 13, have been offered the vaccine against certain sub-types of the HPV [Human Papilloma Virus] since 2010 – the initiating agent in over 80% of such tumours. This should dramatically reduce the incidence of the disease in decades to come.

There are far more women in medicine these days and the majority of GP surgeries now have a female doctor. There are Practice Nurses, many of whom are also trained to undertake 'smear tests', whom patients can also talk to about any 'personal' symptoms – so don't shy away from going to see someone if you need to.

Alternatively, screening can be undertaken at the Staywell Clinic, which is run by the Isle of Man Anti-Cancer Association since Cervical screening was set up on the Island in 1964. Clinics are held two evenings a week in the Women and Children's Department at Noble's Hospital with only female staff present. To make an appointment, please call 642638 on Monday or Thursday mornings.

Eva Peron instilled hope in the people of Argentina at a time when few others stood up for those who felt neglected and down-trodden. The steps forward taken within the management of Cervical Cancer since her death, with continuing research, allow us to hope that eradication of this, and other Cancers, may not be too far away.



Brought to you by the Isle of Man Anti-Cancer Association
Isle of Man registered charity number 188



www.iomaca.org.im



Celebrating 60 years (1959 – 2019) of raising funds to support research into cancer, raise awareness of cancer and assist those affected by cancer