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**PRESS RELEASE**

**‘Fear of Finding Out’ Makes up a Third of Conscious Reasons  
Why We Don’t Visit The Doctor<sup>i</sup>**

- **Unhealthy people are less likely to visit the GP due to the ‘Fear of Finding Out’<sup>ii</sup>**
- **60 percent of adults have a fatalistic or negative attitude towards their own health<sup>iii</sup>**
- **New report highlights psychological barriers which could be delaying diagnosis and optimal health outcomes<sup>iv</sup>**
- **The report is launched as AbbVie announces a new partnership programme for 2017, called Live:Lab™, which aims to improve the nation’s health through focusing on prevention**

**MAIDENHEAD, UK, 30 January 2017; 00.01** – AbbVie, a global research-based biopharmaceutical company, today publishes a new evidence review in partnership with think tank 2020health which highlights the psychological reasons which are causing British adults to delay or avoid seeking medical attention.<sup>iv</sup>

The new report, titled **‘The Fear of Finding Out: identifying psychological barriers to symptom presentation and diagnosis in the UK’**, has found that despite the abundance of health information now available, one of the main barriers preventing adults from making healthier lifestyle choices is a ‘Fear of Finding Out’.<sup>v,vi</sup> This makes up nearly a third of all conscious reasons why individuals may be delaying or avoiding visiting their doctor or seeking medical advice when they may be concerned, or not taking the relevant steps to improve their health.<sup>i</sup>

The ‘Fear of Finding Out’ is more likely to affect those who have an unhealthy lifestyle and are either: smokers, heavy drinkers, have an unhealthy diet and/or are obese.<sup>ii</sup> The report highlights the potential scale of this as a barrier to making healthy lifestyle changes.<sup>iv</sup> 83 percent of middle aged adults (aged 40 to 60), either drink too much, weigh too much or don’t exercise enough.<sup>vii</sup> 40per cent (192,470 deaths) of all the deaths in England are related to people’s behaviour.<sup>viii</sup> Managing this ill health caused by lifestyle is costing the NHS more than £11 billion each year.<sup>viii</sup>

Sixty percent of adults in the UK have a negative or fatalistic attitude towards their health.<sup>iii</sup> and the report reveals that the ‘Fear of Finding Out’ can be especially true for those would struggle to cope with the knowledge of a life-threatening illness.<sup>v,vi</sup> It can also apply to those who do not want to be ‘pressured into making lifestyle changes’.<sup>ii</sup>

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The report also reveals differences of attitudes between genders as men were more generally seen to endure symptoms for longer before seeking medical help, and report higher levels of embarrassment during or in relation to medical appointments, than women.<sup>ix</sup>

The 'Fear of Finding Out' is made up of the following fears:

- **Fears of the environment** – 45per cent of women and 37per cent of men found the difficulty making an appointment a key barrier, according to a UK cancer study<sup>x</sup>
- **Fears of investigative processes** – 33per cent of adults who admitted that they had avoided a doctor visit that they deemed necessary cited 'discomfort with a body examination' as the primary reason<sup>i</sup>
- **Fears of outcomes and implications** – one of the most widely endorsed barriers to consultation in regards to cancer was found to be the 'worry about what the doctor might find', which was true for 34per cent of men and 40per cent of women.<sup>x</sup> Furthermore, one literature review cited in the report found that between 12 and 55per cent of people who undergo testing for HIV fail to return to learn whether they are infected<sup>xi</sup>

Some of the psychological fears faced by those who may delay seeking medical advice are highlighted in the report, and include:

- The fear of appearing weak<sup>xii</sup>
- The fear of shame that may accompany a diagnosis<sup>xiii</sup>
- The fear of partner abandonment<sup>xiv</sup>
- The fear of loss of sexuality post treatment<sup>xv</sup>
- The fear of the results getting into the wrong hands<sup>xvi</sup>

The launch of this report comes as AbbVie announces a new partnership discovery programme for 2017, called Live:Lab™. The project is a new ambitious collaboration, which aims to improve the health of the nation by looking deeper into the 'Fear of Finding Out' and find an innovative solution to help reduce preventable health conditions and improve quality of life in the middle aged and beyond with a view to alleviating the strain placed on the NHS through chronic disease.

AbbVie is focusing on preventative health, vital in supporting a sustainable NHS, as we become an ageing society. Through Live:Lab™, AbbVie is recruiting some of the nation's most forward thinking individuals from the worlds of technology, health, creativity, gaming and data to collaborate and devise an innovative solution that will empower people to take control of their wellbeing.

**Julia Manning, Chief Executive and Founder of 2020Health said:** "This report highlights some very genuine worries and fears that get in the way of people receiving timely health diagnoses and advice, which require a sympathetic response. It is of particular interest that a lack of motivation and valuing health less are emphasised as being delaying factors for everyone, not just those with poor health literacy. We have made excellent progress with some conditions, but this paper shows there is still significant work to be done to understand and solve the issues generally that prevent some people of working age accessing healthcare."

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**Matt Regan, UK General Manager, AbbVie said:** “The findings from the literature based review highlight how preventative health should be a priority for all of us. With long term funding constraints on our health system, it is part of our duty as an industry to support the NHS in remaining sustainable for as long as possible by being responsible for the nation’s health in a way that is in addition to the medicines we make. We’re proud to be part of this unique collaboration through Live:Lab™, and will be listening to real people to provide solutions that make a remarkable impact on lives.”

**Alan Milburn, spokesperson for the AbbVie Live:Lab™ project said:** “As a society we are living for longer, but more of us are in poor health. With 15 million people living with a long-term health condition, there are huge implications to delaying seeking medical advice. Delayed diagnosis means more complicated and costly treatment and can ultimately lead to more deaths. In today’s ageing society it has never been more important to address the barriers preventing people from accessing medical support. Through Live:Lab™, we will aim to empower people to engage with their health and through collaboration and sharing of ideas, we will provide tangible solutions that will have benefit to the health of the nation.

“Just last week, this government published its 10 point plan for British Industry which highlights a reinvigorated commitment to science and innovation – something which the principles of Live:Lab also support.”

**David (51, London), who admits to having a fear of finding out has said:**

“I am notorious for putting off going to see the doctor. Last time I was at the surgery, my GP was visibly surprised to see me. I know its an imaginary crutch but I tell myself that what you don’t know can’t hurt you! – my classic avoidance tactic.

I’d rather not know if there was something wrong with my health and just carry on blissfully enjoying life. With a loving wife, four sons, three daughters and a career in the entertainment industry which depends on my good health, I’m wary of going to the doctor and being told something’s wrong.”

-Ends-

## Notes to editors

### About AbbVie

AbbVie is a global, research-based biopharmaceutical company formed in 2013 following separation from Abbott Laboratories. The company’s mission is to use its expertise, dedicated people and unique approach to innovation to develop and market advanced therapies that address some of the world’s most complex and serious diseases. Together with its wholly-owned subsidiary, Pharmacyclics, AbbVie employs more than 28,000 people worldwide and markets medicines in more than 170 countries. For further information on the company and its people, portfolio and commitments, please visit [www.abbvie.co.uk](http://www.abbvie.co.uk)

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<sup>i</sup> Kannan, V. and Veazie, P., 2014. Predictors of avoiding medical care and reasons for avoidance behavior. *Medical Care*, 52(4), p.336.

<sup>ii</sup> Dryden, R. et al., 2012. What do we know about who does and does not attend general health checks? Findings from a narrative scoping review. *BMC Public Health* 2012, 12:723

<sup>iii</sup> King's fund (Candace, I.) 2012. Future trends. Available: [https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field\\_publication\\_summary/future-trends-overview.pdf](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field_publication_summary/future-trends-overview.pdf) [Accessed Jan 2017].

<sup>iv</sup> 2020health: The Fear of Finding Out – Identifying psychological barriers to symptom presentation and diagnosis in the UK. 2017. Available at <http://www.2020health.org/2020health>.

<sup>v</sup> Hvidberg, L. et al., 2015. Barriers to healthcare seeking, beliefs about cancer and the role of socio-economic position. A Danish population-based study. *Preventive medicine*, 71, pp.107–113.

<sup>vi</sup> Whitaker, K. et al., 2015b. Emotional responses to the experience of cancer ‘alarm’ symptoms. *Psycho-Oncology*, 25, pp.567–573.

<sup>vii</sup> Public Health England – Modern life responsible for ‘worrying’ health in middle aged’. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/modern-life-responsible-for-worrying-health-in-middle-aged> [Accessed Jan 2017].

<sup>viii</sup> Public Health England – Living healthily in midlife can double your chances of being healthy at 70 and beyond. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/phe-launches-one-you> [Accessed Jan 2017].

<sup>ix</sup> Yousaf, O., Grunfeld, A. and Hunter, S., 2015. A systematic review of the factors associated with delays in medical and psychological help-seeking among men. *Health psychology review*, 9(2), pp.264–276.

<sup>x</sup> Robb, K. et al., 2009. Public awareness of cancer in Britain: a population-based survey of adults. *British Journal of Cancer* (2009) 101, S18 – S23

<sup>xi</sup> Sweeny, K. et al. 2010. Information avoidance: Who, what, when, and why. *Review of general psychology*, 14(4), p.340.

<sup>xii</sup> Farrimond, H., 2012. Beyond the caveman: Rethinking masculinity in relation to men’s help-seeking. *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine*, 16(2), p.208.

<sup>xiii</sup> Green, A. et al., 2010. Drinking patterns, gender and health III: Avoiding versus seeking health care. *Addiction Research & Theory*, 18(2), p.160.

<sup>xiv</sup> Jones, C. et al., 2014. A systematic review of barriers to early presentation and diagnosis with breast cancer among black women. *BMJ Open*, 4(2), p.e004076.

<sup>xv</sup> Smith, L. Pope, C. Botha, J., 2005. Patients’ help-seeking experiences and delay in cancer presentation: a qualitative synthesis. *Lancet* 2005; 366: 825–31 Published online August 11, 2005 DOI:10.1016/S0140-6736(05) 67030-4

<sup>xvi</sup> Martin et al., 2015. Exploring attitudes and preferences for dementia screening in Britain: contributions from carers and the general public. *BMC Geriatrics* (2015) 15:110 DOI 10.1186/s12877-015-0100-6

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