

**From Hilary Mantel May 2015
To EndoActive's Conference on Endometriosis**

I should like to send my warmest good wishes to all those organising and attending the conference at Sydney University Medical School. As a woman who has struggled with this condition since my teenage years, I know the importance of clear information, early diagnosis and varied treatment options. No one should be in any doubt as to how this condition can blight lives, through pain, disability, infertility. The social costs of the condition are high. It takes women out of the workforce during their most powerful years. The individual costs of the condition are high. It injures relationships and makes life a daily struggle. It sabotages hopes and dreams.

But there is a way forward, if those who allocate resources for research and treatment will wake up and listen; and if individual doctors and nurses will listen to their patients, and take the trouble to understand. No child or woman, no person at all, who complains of pain should be brushed off and told to go away. There is always a cause, and there is frequently a remedy. Endometriosis may not be easy to diagnose and treat, in the present state of understanding, but a great deal can be done to mitigate its effects and allow women who have the condition to live the unafraid lives they want to live.

Endometriosis is not a condition you can explain in one sentence, and it is difficult for women to speak of, because it touches the most intimate part of life. But we can keep on speaking out, explaining, encouraging each other. I am delighted that this conference will create an opportunity for publicity and a forum for discussion, and I hope it will allow individual women to see a way forward.

Speaking from my own experience, I would say it is important to keep your eyes on the future. If the condition is stopping you doing what you want, or having what you want, then reshape your ambitions and make them bigger.

Above all, if you get well, don't forget women still struggling, or the generation now growing up. It ought to be possible to ensure that no little girl born today endures the suffering this condition can cause.

That should be our ambition: to retrieve our own worth, value and happiness, and to ensure that the women of the future are free.

With love and hope,
Hilary Mantel