

Cancer Consortium

A PERIODIC UPDATE OF PROGRESS AND EVENTS

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Health Economics and Cancer Policy Analysis

In recent years, the need to increase research capacity in health economics and cancer policy analysis has been identified by the Department of Health and Children (DoHC), Ireland and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS), Northern Ireland as a priority to improving the quality of cancer care on the island of Ireland. As a result, health economics and cancer policy analysis were added to the renewed Memorandum of Understanding signed in Belfast on 13 November 2006, which re-established the Ireland-Northern Ireland-National Cancer Institute (NCI) Cancer Consortium.



Attendees at the May 2007 All-Ireland Health Economics Workshop

Under the auspices of the Consortium, the NCI organized an All-Ireland Health Economics Workshop on 21-22 May 2007 to facilitate information sharing on potential areas of health economics and policy research between Consortium participants and NCI staff and grantees with relevant expertise and experience in this area. The workshop goal was to determine specific research topics and identify potential projects and venues where Irish fellows may participate and receive mentoring. The meeting promoted substantial interchange between more than twenty delegates from Ireland and Northern Ireland and staff and grantees of the NCI on the similarities and differences in regard to policy questions, organization of healthcare services, and data sources between the national settings.

The first day of the workshop focused on how cancer-related health economics and health services research data is used to inform cancer control policy makers and to describe national sources of data for obtaining descriptive estimates of cancer-related economics parameters and patterns of care. The second day illustrated how these estimates are then utilized in the context of policy-oriented models. An evening reception was held at the Embassy of Ireland.

As a consequence of the workshop, Queen's University Belfast held an international seminar on health policy and health system decision making on 6 November 2007, with an NCI grantee in attendance as presenter. The program and presentations from the Northern Ireland Health Economics Workshop are available on the Consortium Web site.

Dr. Kirsty O'Brien Awarded Cancer Prevention Fellowship

Dr. Kirsty O'Brien was awarded a fellowship through the National Cancer Institute (NCI) Cancer Prevention Fellowship Program in 2007 and is the fourth fellow to be funded by the Health Research Board, Ireland. Dr. O'Brien has a BS in Biomedical Science from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland and a PhD in Molecular Genetics from Newcastle University, England. She is currently undertaking a Masters in Public Health at University College Dublin, Ireland and will participate in the NCI Summer Curriculum in Cancer Prevention before beginning the mentored research phase of the program. Dr. O'Brien has an interest in pursuing research in the areas of epidemiology, nutrition, epigenetics, and cancer prevention.

NCI Summer Curriculum in Cancer Prevention Hosts 23 Island Scholars

Twenty-three health and cancer care professionals from the island of Ireland participated in two National Cancer Institute (NCI) Summer Curriculum in Cancer Prevention courses. A four-week Principles and Practice of Cancer Prevention and Control Course was held 2-27 July 2007 at the NCI, followed by a one-week Molecular Prevention Course from 30 July-3 August 2007.

Course and application details are available on the Consortium Web site.

Health Economics, *From Page 1*

The Health Research Board (HRB) and the NCI also launched the HRB/NCI Health Economics Fellowship Program as a pilot program in 2008. The program aims to encourage applicants to pursue careers in health economics on the island of Ireland and culminates in a PhD in health economics. This four-year doctoral development program will be administered through the HRB PhD Scholars Programme in Health Services Research coordinated by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. Ten proposals were received in 2008 and two awards were offered. For more information, contact Dr. Sallyann O'Brien (saobrien@hrb.ie).

The DHSSPS, DoHC, and NCI look forward to continuing collaboration in the area of health economics and cancer policy analysis. For more information about the Consortium's activities in health economics and cancer policy analysis, visit http://www.allirelandnci.org/programs/health_economics.shtml.

Official Opening of the CCRCB Building

The new Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology (CCRCB) was officially opened on 28 November 2007. Declaring the Centre officially open, Queen's University Belfast Chancellor Senator George Mitchell said, "It is through international research partnerships and the sharing of information that we can create a powerful synergy to combat cancer for the betterment of everyone. Professor Paddy Johnston's international reputation and that of his team are a catalyst in the forging of global partnerships to relieve the human suffering from cancer." Key partnerships include the CCRCB's association with the Ireland-Northern Ireland-National Cancer Institute Cancer Consortium and the recently announced agreement with the National Institute of Immunology in New Delhi, India.



To mark the official opening, a two-day international scientific symposium at the Medical Biology Centre featured top scientific research and cancer experts from around the world. A highlight of the symposium was the inaugural Mitchell lecture, sponsored by Hewlett-Packard and delivered by Dr. Neal Rosen, Head, Developmental Therapeutics, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York.

Nursing Working Group Update

Below are recent activities of the Ireland-Northern Ireland-National Cancer Institute (NCI) Cancer Consortium Nursing Working Group (NRS WG). The NRS WG focuses on expanding educational opportunities for Irish and Northern Irish nurses and promoting nursing and palliative care activities within the Consortium and across the island of Ireland.

Clinical Trials E-learning Module

Launched in January 2007, the Queen's University Belfast (QUB) Clinical Trials E-learning Module enrolled a total of twenty students, sixteen from Northern Ireland and four from Ireland. Thirteen students successfully completed the program in May 2007.

Overall, student feedback was very positive, full of praise for the course's relevancy and highly recommending it to other clinical trials nurses or other professionals interested in working in clinical trials. Some participants described the challenges with using the online module as 'easy but very inconvenient' and expressed that the face-to-face learning was more beneficial. Students found they were most engaged in discussion around the assignment.

Since the completion of the 2007 course, QUB reviewed the trial design and statistical elements and shifted emphasis to critical appraisal. The next module, which commenced in January 2008, had a total of four face-to-face lectures/sessions instead of two over the two-day period to make better use of travel time. For more information, visit the QUB School of Nursing and Midwifery's Web site at www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofNursingandMidwifery/.

Island Nurses Complete 6th Round of NCI Clinical Trials Training

Two island oncology nurses completed the five-week NCI clinical trials training program in the fall of 2007, bringing the total number of Consortium-facilitated island trainees to eighteen. Program coordinators served as mentors to the two island nurses during their U.S. stay. The Consortium plans to continue facilitation of this training opportunity for island oncology nurses. Please check the Consortium Web site for future calls for applications.

Liaison for Palliative Care

In recognition of the importance of palliative care initiatives, Professor Judith Hill, Chief Executive of Northern Ireland Hospice Care, has been invited by the Board of Directors of the Ireland-Northern Ireland-National Cancer Institute Cancer Consortium to act as liaison on new initiatives and educational opportunities in palliative care on the island of Ireland. Professor Hill has previous experience working with the Consortium as the Nursing Working Group chair. Professor Hill's knowledge of and familiarity with palliative care will support the Consortium goals to promote education and improve palliative care on the island of Ireland.

More information on palliative care activities can be found on the Consortium Web site at http://www.allirelandnci.org/programs/palliative_care.shtml.

Nursing Research Workshop Held

On 23 November 2007, the NRS WG conducted a workshop in Belfast to explore a range of issues on palliative care nursing and influence resources and capacity, which is building across the island of Ireland. Approximately 60 key stakeholders and nurse leaders from both the university and service sectors participated. Brendan McCormick, Professor of Nursing Research, University of Ulster, facilitated the workshop. Discussions centered on the potential for a collaborative cancer/palliative nursing research program, how nurses might influence cancer research strategies in order to secure resources, and opportunities for capacity building in cancer nursing research.

Consortium Leadership Changes

The Ireland-Northern Ireland-National Cancer Institute Cancer Consortium welcomes the latest additions to its governing team: Dr. Fenton Howell, Professor Mark Lawler, and Ms. Sheila O'Malley.

Dr. Fenton Howell replaces long-time member Dr. Doug Weed as the Prevention Working Group Chair. Dr. Howell, Director of Public Health, Health Service Executive (HSE)-Population Health Directorate in Ireland, works closely with the National Director and Assistant National Directors to ensure a population health approach is considered on developments in the HSE. He has been very involved in the development of a National Tobacco Framework for the HSE.

Professor Mark Lawler succeeds Professor Patrick Johnston as the Scholar Exchange Working Group (SE WG) chair. Professor Lawler, Director of Post Graduate Teaching and Learning, Trinity Centre for Health Sciences, St. James's Hospital in Dublin, organizes an international cancer conference yearly and is the President of the Irish Association for Cancer Research. His work on chimerism and minimal residual disease has been honored with numerous awards.

Ms. Sheila O'Malley began her tenure as Chief Nursing Officer in the Department of Health and Children (DoHC), Ireland in February 2008 and became a member of the Nursing Working Group. From 1997-2002 she was president of An Bord Altranais where she had a major influence in shaping the future of the Board in a time of significant development and challenge for nursing and midwifery.

The Consortium would like to thank Professor Robert Stout, Ms. Mary McCarthy, and Professor Patrick Johnston for their years of leadership and dedication to the goals of the Consortium. Professor Robert Stout, an integral member of the Consortium since 2002, recently completed his tenure as the Director of the R&D Office; his replacement at the Consortium has yet to be identified. Ms. Mary McCarthy completed her tenure as Chief Nursing Officer of the DoHC and began a new post at the HSE as Clinical Skills Development Director. She was an alternating chair of the NRS WG. Professor Patrick Johnston has been chair of the SE WG since the Consortium's inception in 1999. He has been appointed Dean of the School of Medicine for Queen's University Belfast and Director of the Institute of Health Research. The Consortium wishes Professor Robert Stout, Ms. McCarthy, and Professor Johnston the best in their new endeavors.

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Dr. Anne Cody

Head of Unit Research Infrastructure and Special Initiatives, Health Research Board, Dublin

Dr. Michael Neely

Operational Director, Research & Development Office, Northern Ireland Health and Personal Social Services, Belfast

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Scholar Exchange & Training

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Director of Post Graduate Teaching and Learning, Trinity Centre for Health Sciences, St. James's Hospital, Dublin

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Professor Richard Kaplan

Associate Director, National Cancer Research Network (UK), Leeds and London

Professor Elaine Kay

Consultant Histopathologist, Beaumont Hospital, The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Dublin

All-Ireland Nurses Visit the NCI

From 10 to 13 March 2008, the Chief Nursing Officers of Ireland and Northern Ireland, Sheila O'Malley and Martin Bradley, visited the NIH under the auspices of the All-Ireland NCI Cancer Consortium.

The All-Ireland nursing delegation had several objectives for their visit, including raising the profile of clinical research nursing and clinical nursing research in Ireland and Northern Ireland and engaging with the NIH on potential research collaborations in cancer, nursing informatics and palliative care. The delegation met with various nursing leaders, including Dr. Patricia A. Grady, Director of the National Institute of Nursing, Dr. Clare Hastings, Chief Nursing Officer for Nursing and Patient Care Services, CRC, and Rear Admiral Carol A. Romano, U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps Assistant Surgeon General and Chief Nurse Officer, who gave the delegation a demonstration of the NIH's Clinical Research Information System and overview of the role of informatics in clinical research.



Rear Admiral Carol Romano demonstrates the NIH Clinical Research Information System

The delegation also had the opportunity to visit NCI-designated cancer centers in the Maryland-Washington DC metropolitan area, including the Lombardi Cancer Center at Georgetown University and the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins



Rear Admiral Carol Romano (front, c) welcomes chief nursing officers of Northern Ireland and Ireland Martin Bradley (front, l) and Sheila O'Malley (front, r). At rear are (from l) All-Ireland NCI Cancer Consortium Program Manager Isabel Otero, nurse advisor to chief nursing officer of Ireland Mary Day, nursing research advisor Sarah Condell and nursing officer for Northern Ireland Margaret O'Hagan.

University. The delegation met with various nurse leaders at the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing and Institute for Johns Hopkins Nursing in Baltimore, Maryland, as well as with Paula Rieger, CEO of the Oncology Nursing Society.

Reflecting on the visit, Martin Bradley said, "This has been an excellent visit. We have been able to explore opportunities for nurses in Ireland to make more effective use of the wide range of clinical and research opportunities available in the States, and in turn the potential for American nurses to undertake learning placements in Ireland. We will now be following up on the many contacts we have made, to see now we can further develop the exchange between our countries."

The delegation's visit was recently highlighted in the National Institutes of Health's publication, NIH Record. The article can be viewed at http://nihrecord.od.nih.gov/newsletters/2008/04_04_2008/story6.htm.

Announcements

Consortium Web Site Honors

Since the November 2006 unveiling of the new look to the Consortium Web site, it has won two prestigious awards: (1) the Interactive Media Award for Outstanding Achievement for excellence in the design, development and implementation of a government Web site and (2) the World Wide Web Health Award Bronze Medal for government health Web sites for Spring/Summer 2007. The Consortium Web site logs approximately 1,000 visitors per month.

Joint Research Projects in Cancer Update

Five principle investigators were selected for the Joint Research Projects in Cancer in 2008: Drs. Dean Fennell, Charles Spillane, and Linda Sharp and Professors Ken Mills and Liam Murray. More information on their specific projects will be made available in future publications.

All Ireland Cooperative Oncology Research Group (A-ICORG) Accepted into U.S. Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG)

In May 2006, A-ICORG applied for membership in the highly respected ECOG and was approved as a member.

2006 Activities Report Now Available Online

The *2006 Activities Report: Adding Value Through Partnership in Cancer Research & Education*, which highlights progress made by the Consortium in 2006, is now available on the Consortium Web site. To promote a healthier environment, the Consortium limited the number of prints this year and instead distributed the report electronically. You may view the report online at www.allirelandnci.org/pdf/NCI_06AR_WholeBook.pdf.

Nursing Working Group Develops Strategic Plan

The Consortium Nursing Working Group (NRS WG) has identified its priorities in a strategic plan for the years 2007-2010. The NRS WG will continue to promote educational opportunities for clinical research nurses across the island of Ireland and facilitate all-Ireland collaboration in relation to nursing research. The NCI/All Ireland Cancer Nurses Working Group Work Plan (2007-2010) is posted on the Consortium Web site at <http://www.allirelandnci.org/programs/nursing.shtml>.

What's Next

Cancer 2008: 7-9 May 2008 at Dublin Castle, Dublin, Ireland. For details, see <http://www.conferencepartners.ie/cancer2008/>.

2008 National Cancer Institute (NCI) Summer Curriculum in Cancer Prevention

- o Principles and Practice of Cancer Prevention and Control Course: 7 July - 1 August
- o Molecular Prevention Course: 4-8 August

The 2008 call for applications closed on 15 February 2008. For information regarding 2009 call for applications, visit http://www.allirelandnci.org/fellowships_and_training/nci_summer_curriculum.shtml.

4th All-Ireland NCI Cancer Conference: 30 November - 3 December 2008 in Dublin, Ireland. Abstract submissions are due 17 October 2008. Check the Consortium Web site for more information.



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Cancer Consortium

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