

Year in Review: Our Working Group Programmes in Practise

CANCER REGISTRIES

The Cancer Registries Working Group has the long-term goal of consolidating data from the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry and the National Cancer Registry of Ireland, and developing joint programmes to help researchers better understand cancer rates, trends, and outcomes on the entire island of Ireland. The Working Group consists of three members from the island of Ireland and the US. In 2003, the Group met at the All-Ireland Cancer Conference in Cork to welcome the cancer epidemiology fellows. Dr Brenda Edwards, Associate Director of the Surveillance Research Program at the Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences, NCI, also attended the meeting and welcomed the fellows on behalf of NCI.

All-Ireland Cancer Statistics Second Report 1998-2000

The Departments of Health and Children (Ireland) and of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Northern Ireland) provided funding for the two cancer registries on the island of Ireland to produce a second All-Ireland Cancer Incidence and Mortality Report. Mr Joseph Campo, an epidemiologist at the Washington State (US) Cancer Registry, was recruited to produce this report. He began his yearlong work at the NCRI in July 2003.

Joint North-South Projects

Joint North-South registries research meetings were held in April and August. The group

discussed a number of existing North-South projects and explored some potential projects. Existing projects include:

- A cross-border collaborative study of Barrett's oesophagus and oesophageal adenocarcinoma (FINBAR Study—Factors Influencing Barrett's Adenocarcinoma Relationships), which is progressing well with 118 cases, 105 Barrett's controls and 81 normal controls recruited in Northern Ireland; and 102 cases and 43 Barrett's controls recruited in Ireland
- Trends in surgical rates among breast cancer patients in Ireland and the role of screening programmes: Observational study (comparison of Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland data for 1993-99)
- Breast cancer incidence, mortality, and stage at diagnosis in Ireland: North-South comparisons and the role of screening
- All-Ireland cancer incidence and mortality, 1994-96: Comparisons with other European data and review of risk factors
- Trends in cervical cancer mortality in Ireland and Britain: Evidence for an effect of population-based screening
- Participation in the Cancer Atlas of the UK and Ireland, including co-authorship of melanoma and pancreas site-accounts

The group plans to produce a number of papers based on the first and second All-Ireland Cancer Incidence and Mortality Reports. Future subjects for projects and studies include:

- Colorectal cancer: A cohort study of risk factors
- Breast cancer genetic study
- Knowledge of and attitudes toward cancer prevention
- Deprivation and cancer
- Patterns of care in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland
- Comparisons of cancer survival rates between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland
- Updating of the all-Ireland cancer incidence database in Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) format, to include 1994-2000 data
- Prevalence of preventable risk factors for cancer in the population

Patterns of Care

The NCRI provided funding for an epidemiologist to investigate changes in patterns of care and survival between '94-'98 and '98-'01. The Cancer Registries Working Group agreed that consolidation of the Republic of Ireland (NCRI) and Northern Ireland (NICR) datasets could facilitate investigation of differences in patterns of care and survival in both jurisdictions.

Knowledge and Attitudes regarding Cancer Prevention

Dr Harry Comber, member of the Cancer Registries Working Group, proposed a study to look at knowledge and attitudes regarding cancer prevention. The Cancer Registries Working Group agreed that this could be a very valuable project

and that Dr Comber should bring the proposal to the Consortium through the Implementation Group. Dr Doug Weed, Chief of the Office of Preventive Oncology at NCI and Chair of the Prevention Working Group, supported this proposal. Dr Liam Murray (Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, Queen's University Belfast) proceeded with the project in Northern Ireland only. A PhD student will work on the project, where patients will be recruited through General Practitioners (GPs) and the GP knowledge will be surveyed.

Data Harmonization

The two cancer registries submitted a proposal to the Consortium on data harmonization. Co-operative work continues between the registries in areas such as coding and classification, and electronic data collection. Working with Dr Brenda Edwards at the Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) program at NCI, the Group is well advanced in its plans to migrate the joint registries database to SEER*Stat format and make it available on NCI web server. As part of this project, data quality must be checked by joint re-abstraction, probably using a tumour registration officer from NCRI, which would require extra funding.

The two registries have also agreed to begin work on an all-Ireland cancer registries web site, including a facility for detailed interrogation of the data and secure data transfer between registries.

All-Ireland Cancer Conference

The NCRI hosted this year's all-Ireland Cancer Conference in Cork, Ireland—a very successful event with over 400 delegates and fifty speakers from Ireland, the US and Britain who presented on a wide range of topics. (See page 41 for more details.)

Training

Epidemiology Fellows

The first two Cancer Epidemiology Fellows ended their fellowships at the Irish registries at the end of 2003. These fellowships have been very successful for both the fellows and the registries. Both fellows succeeded in obtaining senior positions in cancer epidemiology on the island of Ireland: Dr Peter McCarron through the Public Health Career Scientist Award at the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health at Queens University Belfast and Dr Paul Walsh as a senior lecturer grade epidemiologist at the National Cancer Registry in Cork. Dr McCarron will work with the cancer registry on prostate cancer screening and early life influences in cancer, while Dr Walsh will work on a Department of Health-sponsored study of patterns of care and outcomes in cancer. The two fellows have been invaluable research resources for the registries and valuable links with the research teams at NCI.

Dr Deirdre Cronin, a third Epidemiology Fellow, began work at the National Cancer Registry (Ireland) in April. In June, she joined Dr Brenda Edwards' team at NCI. Drs Comber and Edwards

planned a comprehensive programme of education and experience for Dr Cronin's year at NCI. In 2003, Dr Cronin attended a number of courses at Johns Hopkins University and at NCI, and participated in meetings of the International Association for Cryptologic Research (IACR) and North American Association of Central Cancer Registries (NAACCR).

Certified Tumour Registrar Qualification

The NCRI became involved in a project with NCI and the US Center for Disease Control (CDC) to provide international certification of tumour registrars. Outside the United States, there are few formal programmes leading to a qualification or certification of tumour registrars. It is our hope that the result of this project will be an internationally recognized certificate.

Prevention Course

As in previous years, staff from both cancer registries attended the Summer Prevention courses at NCI. Dr Anna Gavin, Director of the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry, and Lesley Anderson, a doctoral student with the FINBAR project, were among the staff participants.

CLINICAL TRIALS NETWORK

Clinical Trials Working Group efforts focus on strengthening island of Ireland cancer centre capacity to conduct cancer clinical trials. The Group works to maximize Ireland and Northern Ireland collaboration with each other and with international entities to increase the number of