

ICORG, and Dr Karen Bailie, Director of the CRSC, for their foresight and hard work in forming the All-Island Cancer Clinical Trials Cooperative Group.

The Cooperative Group is jointly funded under the Consortium by the HRB in Dublin and the Research and Development (R&D) Office in Belfast. In 2003, the Group was awarded a € 1 million two-year planning grant to begin its work. Its principal role is to initiate and coordinate clinical trials in cancer hospitals on the island of Ireland.

With the relatively small population on the island of Ireland (approximately 5.4 million), it is essential that the two jurisdictions collaborate with one another, Europe and the United States to create a pool of participants large enough to complete trials in a timely fashion. However, to participate in multi-centre clinical trials, organisations must demonstrate the requisite sophistication to recruit suitable patient populations, administer the complex therapies, and track the huge volumes of data. It is hoped that the establishment of the Cooperative Group, working closely with the network of cancer hospitals, will lead to all-island participation in trials, increased competition for trials on an international level, and thus improvement of patients' access to new cancer therapies.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SHARING

The Information Technology Working Group focuses on enhancing information technologies across the island of Ireland to support coordinated clinical trials; facilitate training and education; ensure effective data management; and promote health care delivery. The Working Group includes six members from the three partnering jurisdictions.

In January, the first TELESYNERGY® User Group meeting was held in Bethesda, Maryland. Participants came from Belfast and Dublin, and also from NCI, Wheeling, West Virginia and Fort Lauderdale, Florida to explore objectives in three broad areas: education and training; clinical trials; and technical usage. The Group discussed the next state of development of TELESYNERGY® as its use continues to evolve and expand on the island of Ireland. TELESYNERGY® has been used for multidisciplinary meetings and conferences; educational programmes; research, radiation therapy, and nursing exchanges; and clinical case discussions within the island of Ireland. Potential uses of and advances in TELESYNERGY® include radiation oncology. Two research projects were funded in Dublin to further examine this functionality.

The TELESYNERGY® system is being further developed with refinement of the optical microscopy function to enable real-time display of specialized cytogenetics including fluorescent in-

situ hybridization (FISH). In addition, a "lite" version of the system is being developed for cancer centres that may not require the full functionality of the existing TELESYNERGY® suite. Professor Hollywood, together with NCI/CIT colleagues, obtained a Health Research Board (HRB) equipment grant for the additional development of a Tele-Archiving and Data-Warehouse linked to the TELESYNERGY® Multimedia Medical Imaging Workstation Network.

The TELESYNERGY® systems in Belfast and Dublin were updated during 2003. A second TELESYNERGY® suite was added at the Trinity College Dublin (TCD) School of Radiation Therapy/Academic Unit of Clinical and Molecular Oncology (AUCMO). The TCD School of Radiation Therapy/AUCMO provided funding and NCI's CIT provided technical support.

The TELESYNERGY® system was endorsed within the *Development of Radiation Oncology Services in Ireland*¹—a report by an Expert Group. The report suggested that TELESYNERGY® and other telemedicine developments would be a core technology in linking a proposed network of Radiation Oncology units within Ireland and beyond. Significant expansion of the TELESYNERGY® network within the Republic of Ireland is expected in late 2004/early 2005.

The TELESYNERGY® system was demonstrated for several dignitaries, including the Prime Ministers

of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, Australian and Finnish ambassadors, and a member of the Malaysian royalty.

The C3D system, the second/updated version of net-Trials®, was implemented in 2003 and is being examined by members of the HRB-funded clinical trials unit in the South Western Health Authority.

Throughout 2003, Working Group members had several articles published in journals^{2,3} such as *CancerWise*. Some publications are available on the Consortium Web site. In addition to presenting at the Consortium-sponsored All-Ireland Cancer Conference in Cork, members also presented at several national and international meetings, including the annual scientific meeting of the European Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology.

¹ Hollywood, Donal, et al. *The Development of Radiation Oncology Services in Ireland*. October 2003. Department of Health and Children Ireland.

² Johnston, P. G. & Daly, P. A. *NCI-Ireland Consortium: A Unique International Partnership in Cancer Care*. *Oncologist* 6, 453-8 (2001).

³ McAleer, J. J., O'Loan, D. & Hollywood, D. P. *Broadcast Quality Teleconferencing for Oncology*. *Oncologist* 6, 459-62 (2001).

NURSING

Besides the two island of Ireland Chief Nursing Officers Judith Hill and Mary McCarthy, Nursing Working Group members include clinicians, nurse educators, and nurse managers who are all dedicated to furthering issues of interest to