

# Year in Review: Our Working Group Programmes in Practise

## SCHOLAR EXCHANGE

*Professor Patrick Johnston, Chair*

Scholar exchange and training remain a primary focus of the Consortium and are included in the initiatives of every Consortium Working Group.

Accelerated development of highly skilled oncologists, nurses, scientists, and other cancer professionals is essential for world-class cancer research and treatment on the island of Ireland. To this end, the Consortium facilitates entrance for island of Ireland health professionals into formal training programmes that reflect its collaborative nature and demonstrate sustainable career development. Fellowships and shorter-term training opportunities are offered as funding becomes available through the Health Research Board (Ireland) and the Research and Development Office (Northern Ireland). E-learning opportunities are also being explored as more easily accessible alternatives for advanced education.

## CANCER REGISTRIES/ EPIDEMIOLOGY

*Dr Harry Comber, Chair*

The Cancer Registries Working Group's long-term goals are consolidation of data from the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry and the National Cancer Registry of Ireland; and development of joint programmes to help researchers better understand cancer rates, trends, and outcomes on the entire island of Ireland. The three-member Working Group meets through regular teleconferences and occasional face-to-

face encounters. The Directors of the two island of Ireland registries also meet regularly.

## All-Ireland Cancer Statistics Second Report 1998-2000

The All-Ireland Cancer Statistics Second Report 1998-2000, co-authored by Mr Joe Campo (U.S. Washington State Cancer Registry), Dr Anna Gavin (Northern Ireland Cancer Registry) and Dr Harry Comber (National Cancer Registry of Ireland), was launched at Queen's University Belfast in September. The Chief Medical Officers for Ireland and Northern Ireland and the Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University attended the launch.

## Joint North-South Projects

A joint North-South registries research meeting was held in October.

Ongoing joint projects include:

- **A cross-border collaborative study of Barrett's oesophagus and oesophageal adenocarcinoma (FINBAR Study-Factors Influencing Barrett's Adenocarcinoma Relationships).** Recruitment for this study ceased at the end of 2004, on target, with approximately 750 cases and controls. Based on analysis of this epidemiological data, Research Fellow Ms Lesley Anderson was awarded a PhD from Queen's University Belfast. A North-South steering group will administer use of the biological samples.
- **Influence of mammographic screening on breast-conserving surgery in Ireland.** *The European*

*Journal of Cancer Prevention* accepted this cross-border observational study for publication.

- **Breast cancer incidence, mortality, and stage at diagnosis in Ireland: North-South comparisons and the role of screening.** This paper is in final draft.
- **Trends in cervical cancer mortality in Ireland and Britain: Evidence for an effect of population-based screening.** “Recent trends in cervical cancer mortality in Britain and Ireland: the case for population-based cervical cancer screening,” an article by Consortium members Drs Harry Comber and Anna Gavin, was published in the British Journal of Cancer [Br J Cancer 91(11): 1902-4.].
- **Cancer Atlas of the UK and Ireland.** Publication is scheduled for July 2005.

### Planned Studies

- The Health Research Board (Ireland) and the Research and Development Office (Northern Ireland) provided funding for the project “Factors Underlying Differences and Trends in PSA Testing, Biopsy and Prostate Cancer Incidence in Ireland 1994-2003.”
- The Irish Cancer Society agreed to provide funding of €75,000 for an all-Ireland study “Opportunities for Primary Prevention and Early Detection of Cancer in Ireland: A Proposal for the Investigation of Public Awareness, Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviours.”
- “Cancer and Excess Weight in Ireland: Estimating the Impact of

Overweight and Obesity on Current and Future Cancer Incidence and Mortality.” No funding was made available in 2004. It was suggested as a suitable project for an NCI cancer prevention fellow from the island of Ireland.

### Training

#### *Epidemiology Fellows*

Dr Deirdre Cronin returned to Ireland in July 2004, having spent a year with Dr Brenda Edwards’ team at the Surveillance Research Program, NCI. Dr Cronin worked with a number of groups at NCI and continues to collaborate with Dr Linda Harlan, an epidemiologist with the NCI’s applied research program.

#### *Certified Tumour Registrar (CTR) Qualification*

Mary Chambers (National Cancer Registry of Ireland) is a member of a working group carrying out a feasibility study for an international CTR qualification.

#### *NCI Cancer Prevention Fellowship*

Dr Lesley Anderson (Northern Ireland Cancer Registry) was awarded a three-year cancer prevention fellowship under the direction of Dr Doug Weed, Chair of the Consortium Prevention Working Group and Director of NCI Cancer Prevention Fellowship Program.

### CLINICAL TRIALS

#### *Dr Ruth Barrington, Chair*

A major goal of the Consortium is to strengthen the capacity for cancer centres in Ireland and Northern