

oncologists, translational researchers, computational biologists, and software engineers from Belfast and four other leading institutions: Cambridge, Oxford, London, and Birmingham. The aim is to deliver modular, distributed software solutions to four key problems: clinical trial patient entry; randomization and follow-up; storage and analysis of complex datasets; and linking trial and epidemiology data with profiling information.

The CCRCB will appoint a dedicated bioinformatician to support the distributed CancerGrid software developers and establish tools for the rapid localization, access and manipulation of clinical and biological datasets working closely with TELESYNERGY®. CancerGRID will facilitate trials management and future collaboration across international boundaries by delivering a working services-based Grid infrastructure for cancer clinical trials.

CCRCB is involved in collaboration directly with the University of Cambridge e-science centre to develop user interface software that enables communication of complex biological datasets in addition of pathology and radiological datasets using TELESYNERGY®.

The recent £2.3M Cancer Research UK early clinical trials programme grant is supporting vital infrastructure for early clinical trials. TELESYNERGY® will be employed in international investigator meetings and for sharing of translational research datasets, eg. a Belfast-led international phase II trial of velcade in mesothelioma involving 7 centres including The Republic of Ireland, Netherlands, Italy, London, and Scotland.¹

¹ Information for this section was provided in part by Dr Dean A. Fennell, Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology.

NURSING

Ms Mary McCarthy, Chair

The Nursing Working Group (NRS WG) finalised its Action Plan to implement a strategy for nursing within the Consortium. The Board of Directors approved the Action Plan in January. The Action Plan and Strategy are posted on the Consortium Web site.

Current NRS WG membership was reviewed and consideration was given to inclusion of nurses from clinical trials and other services areas where appropriate. The WG continued restructuring of the oncology clinical fellowship programme to reflect the current capacity and capability of nursing research.

During 2004, the NRS WG continued to facilitate and assist in implementing educational opportunities, identified under the Consortium, for nurses on the island of Ireland. Educational opportunities included Clinical Trials Training, Pre-Doctoral Fellowship, and the NCI Summer Curriculum in Cancer Prevention. The Fatigue Project Coordinator at St Luke's Hospital, Dublin, attended the NCI Summer Curriculum in Cancer course. Three nurses (1 from the Republic; 2 from Northern Ireland) completed clinical trials nurse training at NCI in the fall. Upon their return, they presented a joint proposal "How to educate staff nurses in clinical setting to comply with protocol."

Ms Judith Hill, Chief Nursing Officer (Northern Ireland) and NRS WG member, presented a paper “Update on North South Nursing Initiatives” at Cancer 2004, sponsored by St James’s Hospital in Dublin.

Key goals to move the work of the NRS WG forward into 2005 are:

- Raise nurses’ awareness of educational opportunities available through the Consortium.
- Identify formal education opportunities for clinical trials nurses (e.g. e-learning).
- Assist in selection of appropriate candidates for clinical trials training in 2005.
- Develop tripartite palliative care lecture series.
- Develop an All-Ireland database of cancer nursing research.

Mary McCarthy, Chief Nursing Officer Dublin, assumed chair of the NRS WG in January.

PREVENTION

Dr Doug Weed, Chair

The Prevention Working Group (PRV WG) focuses on developing primary prevention; screening and early detection; chemoprevention; biomarker research; molecular prevention research; and research on lifestyle factors such as diet and exercise on the island of Ireland. The PRV WG accomplishes this through various workshops and training/fellowship programmes. In 2004, PRV WG efforts resulted in the following activities:

NCI Summer Curriculum in Cancer Prevention

Twenty-six scientists, nurses, and physicians from the island of Ireland attended the 2004 NCI Summer Curriculum in Cancer Prevention programme in the U.S. Eighteen of the participants were from Republic of Ireland and eight from Northern Ireland. Participants had the opportunity to complete a four-week course in the principles and practice of cancer prevention and control and a one-week course in molecular prevention. Both courses took place at the National Cancer Institute (U.S.) and are sponsored by the Office of Preventive Oncology, Division of Cancer Prevention.

Cancer Prevention Fellowship Program

In 2004, the NCI Cancer Prevention Fellowship Program, for the first time since its inception, opened its cancer prevention fellowships to applicants outside of the U.S.

After a comprehensive recruitment effort in Ireland and Northern Ireland, the NCI received eight applications from island of Ireland cancer researchers. The Scientific Education Committee at NCI reviewed the applications. Four island of Ireland and twenty-six U.S. applicants were invited for the interview phase at NCI. Fellowships were awarded to three island of Ireland post doctoral scholars: Lesley Ann Anderson (PhD exp), Queen’s University, Belfast; Gwen Murphy (PhD exp), Trinity College, Adelaide & Meath Hospital, Dublin; and Sharon Glynn (PhD), Dublin City