

Spotlight on Consortium Scholars

NURSES' CLINICAL TRIALS PROGRAMME

Ruth Hall

Clinical Research Nurse
Belfast City Hospital

This six-week programme, aimed at improving education and communication between Ireland, Northern Ireland and the National Cancer Institute (NCI), instantly appealed to me when I first heard about it. Having worked in clinical trials for only a short time, it seemed the ideal opportunity to improve my knowledge and skills of clinical trials.

Having spent most of my nursing career in Oncology and Haematology both in London and Belfast, it was exciting to have the opportunity to go to such a dedicated Research unit.

An induction day in Belfast included a teleconference with our preceptors, Elizabeth Ness, Georgie Cusack, and Joyce Stocker — all of whom were instrumental to our learning experiences. At this stage I began to appreciate a real shared approach to our learning as we discussed our aims and objectives. A semi-structured, self-directed approach to our learning was invaluable in maximising our time to its full potential.

Amongst other planned training schedules, we attended the Fundamentals of Clinical Trials and Bio-ethics courses; the CTEP workshop; Grand rounds; and IRB meetings. The courses were very useful, and it was evident from the content covered that our preceptors had taken into account our individual objectives as well as the evaluations of previous participants.

I greatly appreciated all of the networking with various members of the health professional teams. Informal meetings with managers and co-ordinators were invaluable in answering questions specific to cancer clinical trials in Ireland and Northern Ireland. We were shown amazing hospitality and a relaxed environment was key to a memorable networking experience, a resource I hope to continue to use.

Our preceptors/colleagues were always eager to understand differences in our roles and practices. Liasing with our colleague from the Republic was also invaluable in discussing our challenges in the every day working environment. One of our outcomes of this, being our project, is to help foster communication between the research nurses and treatment nurses.

Upon reflection, this programme has undoubtedly been one of the greatest advancements of my career to date. The inspiration and resources offered were amazing. The opportunity to liase with such experts was unique to the NCI. My confidence and competence has increased and I believe I can share my knowledge in a more constructive manner.

Eileen Hanley

Diploma in Oncology Nursing
Oncology Research Nurse
South Infirmary Victoria Hospital
Cork University Hospital

“The Kid with the American dream” . . . this was me. Always wanting bigger and better things. In summer 2004, I achieved my dream when I was accepted for “The Oncology Clinical Trials Nurse” programme. Six weeks in the National Cancer Institute in



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Washington — I was ecstatic. Thankfully my colleges agreed to grant me the six-week leave. So on October 4th 2004 I arrived at the NCI, wide-eyed and full of enthusiasm.

The sheer size of the place excited rather than daunted me. That morning we met ladies who will be stamped in my memory forever and whom I hope will allow us in Ireland to return the hospitality shown to us. Georgie Cusack, Liz Ness, Caryn Stakley, and Joyce Stocker took three Irish women and nurtured them. Three Irish women — Ruth Hall and Wendy Cunningham both from Belfast and I (Eileen Hanley) from Cork — had been fortunate to acquire this course. Liz Ness had painstakingly packed a six-week agenda for us, providing the opportunity to meet many peers from the Oncology Research profession — usually names on a journal and now we were having coffee with them.

This informality is what I most enjoyed; we chatted and teased the minds of our peers, learning very basic and practical skills, which have helped them in their careers and lives as a whole. Here I would like to highlight that the NCI was as much for me a life experience as a professional one — people opened their hearts, their minds and their homes to us. The course was jam-packed and we met people from all units who highlighted the pros and cons of their departments. Particularly they highlighted where they had learned from mistakes. This honesty and total ambience of non-perfection made the task of developing at home so much less daunting. I acquired email addresses and numbers from countless individuals and offers of help should I ever need it in the future.

I was surprised and a little disappointed that there were no structured academic expectations from us on return from this course. I now realise that I would have wasted six weeks of learning by focusing on one goal; instead I have a very broad and practical understanding of all disciplines involved in research. A fundamentals in clinical trials course near the end of the course knitted together all we had experienced in our first few weeks. Two weeks shadowing clinical research Nurses had given us many practical skills for the everyday smooth running of trials.

Needless to say, Washington is a fabulous city — endless monuments, free entrance to most museums, fall weather — we even had the presidential election thrown in. This has been, by far, one of my better professional and life experiences. Thank you to the HRB for sponsorship, to NCI, to my Colleges in Cork, and to Ruth and Wendy for being them. Good Luck to future applicants — it truly is worth competing for.

Wendy Cunningham, BN, RN, SPON

Clinical Research Nurse
Belfast City Hospital

Over the last few years, I have known nurses who had attended the Ireland-Northern Ireland-National Cancer Institute Clinical Trials Training for Nurses at the National Cancer Institute, Washington DC. From listening to their experiences and positive reviews, I was very keen to apply to the programme as soon as the opportunity arose. In spring of 2004, the programme was advertised and, along with another research nurse from my unit and a research nurse from



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Cork, I was accepted. We attended the six-week course at the NCI beginning in October 2004.

My career to date has been mainly Oncology-based and, for just over a year, I have been working in the Cancer Clinical Trials Unit in the Belfast City Hospital. My main objectives were to develop my current practice, and to gain new insight and knowledge in clinical trials from the expertise of the NCI clinical research staff.

There were four main areas to our experience: meeting individuals from the clinical trials arena, educational sessions, placements and a project.

We met many different people at the NCI, each explaining their role and involvement in clinical trials and giving us the opportunity to share ideas and experiences. Some were very similar to my own practice but there were many new and different roles, which were very interesting and inspiring for development back home.

The educational sessions were many and varied. I attended a three-day Fundamentals in Clinical Trials course and a CTEP (Cancer Therapy Evaluation Program) course. Each week, I attended a Bioethics course, Grand Rounds, and Director's Tutorials. All the education sessions were well presented and informative. They proved to be great learning opportunities and also highlighted differences in the NCI system to our own. Mostly, the sessions reinforced my knowledge to date and inspired me with new ideas for my own practice and development.

Learning about individual roles and the education sessions proved to be very helpful to me when I went on the placements in the NCI. I found that I understood a lot of the background, which enriched my experience. Each of the research nurses I shadowed proved to be very welcoming, encouraging and willing to share their expertise and gave me every opportunity to gain the most from my experience. Discussion by teleconference before our visit ensured that the placements better facilitated our learning needs, objectives and interests.

Fairly early into the programme, we identified an area of concern relevant to each of our areas and we developed a project, which was a new concept in the training programme. We based our project on developing a tool focused on meeting the educational needs of the staff nurse caring for patients in clinical trials. The NCI research nurses working on the project with us have been tremendously supportive, encouraging and dynamic, which proved to be a catalyst in our development and learning. They themselves are an amazing resource and contact, which I continue to maintain and utilise. Their insights into clinical research have been invaluable!

All in all, the training programme proved to be a once in a lifetime experience which I will never forget and which has influenced my professional practice and development. The people I met were amazing and I will never forget their interest, enthusiasm, and hospitality. I would highly recommend this Training Programme to others interested — it's amazing!



NCI SUMMER CURRICULUM IN CANCER PREVENTION

Jan Leyden, MB, BAO, BCh

Research Registrar (Gastroenterology SpR)
GI Unit
Mater Misericordiae University Hospital

“The course provided me with an invaluable opportunity to meet fellow researchers, clinicians, and health professionals from other countries...”

I obtained my MB from University College Dublin and am currently in the third year of the Gastroenterology Specialist Registrar training scheme. My MD research is in the area of upper gastrointestinal cancer genomics, particularly gastric cancer. I am studying the genomic profile of gastric cancer cell lines and tissue using microarray technology. I am also involved in high-risk familial colon cancer screening study, a potential model for a national screening programme.

The NCI Summer Curriculum in Cancer Prevention provided a great overview of the current understanding of cancer biology and approaches to cancer prevention. The course provided me with an invaluable opportunity to meet fellow researchers, clinicians, and health professionals from other countries, and to meet world experts in the field of cancer research. Furthermore it gave an insight to the structure and functioning of the National Cancer Institute. I would highly recommend this course to health professionals, both clinical and academic.

Fiona Gilchrist, PhD

Postdoctoral Fellow
Biosciences Institute
University College Cork



Following my PhD studies, I developed a keen interest in improving imaging methods for cancer detection. After successfully gaining my PhD, I worked for the next two years as a Research Fellow in the Department of Chemical Engineering at the University of Cambridge, UK. There, I worked on the development of FRET probes for the selective imaging of carcinomas and nuclear drug targeting. I am currently working at the Stokes Research Institute at the University of Limerick, Ireland. The position is funded through the Marie Curie Transfer of Knowledge Development Host scheme. It is part of a significant body of research funding for researching engineering systems for the early diagnosis of cancer. The area of focus is childhood leukaemia, and we have current research links with the Mid-West Regional Hospital in Limerick, and St Barts hospital in London.

In the summer of 2004, I was delighted to receive an Irish Health Research Board award to attend the Summer curriculum course in Cancer Prevention and Control at the NCI. I experienced the unique atmosphere of the NCI, which has enabled me to gain a broad prospective on cancer prevention and control. This course presented me with a unique opportunity to meet other basic scientists and medical specialists in the field of cancer. I believe that my experience at the NCI will enable me to conduct my research efficiently and also transfer my knowledge to others who are starting their careers in this area. The knowledge which I acquired

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from the NCI course will enable me to approach cancer prevention and control from an interdisciplinary field whereby networks and the understanding of funding and political systems across three countries will ensure that I am capable of working at the interface between cancer biology, chemistry, bio-engineering, and laser physics.

Patricia Heavey, PhD

Research Associate
Northern Ireland Centre for Food and Health
University of Ulster

I am currently working as a Research Associate at the University of Ulster in the area of diet and its role in cancer aetiology. My principal area of work is the development and validation of biomarkers for assessing colorectal cancer risk with the prime aim of using such biomarkers in dietary intervention studies designed to identify potential cancer-preventing regimes and food components.

After attending both the NCI Summer Curriculum in Cancer Prevention and Molecular Prevention courses, I feel very motivated to continue and expand my research. The importance of diet and lifestyle factors in the role of cancer prevention and control was emphasised continually throughout the courses reinforcing my opinion that much has been achieved in this area and much more can be done. The lectures delivered by world experts were informative and interesting. Their knowledge and enthusiasm came across in the lectures and often led to interesting and lively discussions. It was also a great opportunity to meet with other researchers and professionals working in the area of cancer prevention. One of the most

positive aspects of attending these courses was the gathering of both an international and multidisciplinary audience, which together with the diverse lecture topics provided a unique and valuable learning experience.

Kathy Gately, PhD

Clinical Scientist
Institute of Molecular Medicine
Trinity Centre
St James's Hospital

After graduating with a PhD from NUI, Galway, I began working as a postdoctoral fellow in the Haematology Research Group at the Institute of Molecular Medicine (IMM), Trinity College Dublin. My research involved examining the effect, at the molecular level, on patients with chronic myeloid leukemia prior to and during treatment with the tyrosine kinase inhibitor Imatinib (Gleevec).

In March 2004 I joined a new Thoracic Oncology Research Group at the IMM, St James's Hospital Dublin. The focus of our group is translational research; we aim to link cancer research to cancer care. We endeavour to identify novel potential targets for the treatment and early diagnosis of lung cancer and mesothelioma. We are also in the process of establishing a lung cancer biobank, which will provide both normal and tumour tissue which is vital for research.

Having spoken to several previous participants of the NCI Summer Cancer Molecular Prevention Course, I felt that participating in this course would be an excellent opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the molecular biology of cancer and it would also provide me with up-to-date information on current techniques and



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novel methodologies. I was particularly interested in gaining a broader insight into the area of proteomics as researchers at the NCI have extensive expertise in this area.

To this end, I found the course an excellent learning experience and a unique opportunity to attend lectures presented by experts in the different aspects of cancer prevention. Open discussion was encouraged after each presentation and this proved to be very informative. The course also allowed the participants to interact with a diverse group of fellow researchers encouraging the establishment of international collaborations. I thought the program was extremely well organized and overall I really enjoyed my time at the NCI. I would not hesitate to recommend others to apply for the course in the future.

Sharon Doherty, PhD

Research Associate (Vera Furness Fellowship)
School of Biomedical Sciences
University of Ulster

My main area of interest is in bladder carcinogenesis, with particular focus on cell cycle regulation and Seladin-1 and its involvement in this disease. I had previously availed of the opportunity to work at one of the NCI's recognised research centers — Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center (North Carolina) — as a visiting scholar in the laboratory of Prof William Kaufmann. I had found this to be a very worthwhile experience so I was keen to re-establish my existing links with America and also establish new ones.

Therefore, I was delighted to be selected to participate in the NCI cancer prevention course. I was

particularly impressed by the calibre of the lecturers, many of who are world experts in the field of cancer research. I also found the openness and collaborative spirit of the researchers at NCI to be very refreshing. I was keen to attend the course to extend and update my knowledge of cancer prevention and was particularly interested in the topics on xenobiotic metabolism and cancer susceptibility, cell cycle regulation and apoptosis. My current work is also impinging on hormonal carcinogenesis and therefore I found this area quite informative. I also found the course extremely beneficial in that I was able to impart knowledge that I gained from it to the students I tutor in DNA Technology and Oncology.

The NCI cancer prevention course provided a very unique opportunity as I not only had the chance to learn from experts and discuss areas that are closely related to my own research, but I was able to gain a greater perspective of the work carried out by other health care professionals who are based in a more clinical setting. The cancer prevention course is an excellent course, which was both informative and extremely enjoyable and I would strongly recommend it to others.

Glen Doherty, BA, MB, BCh, BAO

Clinical Research Fellow
Department of Clinical Pharmacology
Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

A native of Derry in Northern Ireland, I studied medicine at Trinity College Dublin and obtained my degree in 1998. I subsequently worked in various hospitals in Dublin including St James's and Beaumont Hospitals and completed my general professional



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training before entering a higher training programme in Gastroenterology and Internal Medicine. In July 2002 I took up a post as a Research Fellow in the Department of Clinical Pharmacology at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. Having obtained an HRB Clinical Research Training Fellowship in 2003, I subsequently moved to the Conway Institute at University College Dublin where I am currently completing a PhD on the signaling pathways, which operate downstream of cyclooxygenase-2 in colorectal cancer.

I felt very fortunate to be amongst those chosen to participate in the 2004 molecular prevention course at NCI. The experience has allowed me to broaden my focus somewhat, away from the area where my research is concentrated, in order to see my work in a much broader context. It is rare to have the opportunity to hear speak and to question such a broad range of world class researchers, many of whom are the leaders in their individual fields, during such a short period of time. My contact with other researchers from around Ireland was also valuable and has caused many of us to reflect on how we might better co-ordinate our efforts in this small island to play a meaningful part in the global efforts to develop more effective preventative and therapeutic strategies in the area of cancer. I would not hesitate to recommend the summer curriculum to colleagues with an interest in the biology of cancer prevention.

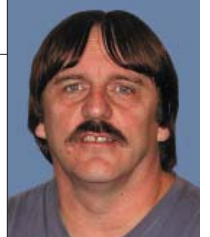
Stewart Church

Experimental Officer/Lab Manager
Ovarian Cancer Group
Department of Oncology
Queen's University Belfast
Belfast City Hospital

I am Experimental Officer within the Molecular Virology Group, Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology, (CCRCB) Queen's University of Belfast and have worked in Cancer Research for twenty-five years. During that time, I have been funded by the Ulster Cancer Foundation, which supports the collaborative development of focused programmes of Cancer Research in Northern Ireland. In recent years, I have been fortunate to train in current molecular biology techniques at NCI—Navy Medical Oncology Branch, National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda; Department of Human Oncology, University of Madison, Wisconsin; and also at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

The Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology is an internationally competitive, cross-faculty and multidisciplinary initiative, with a research programme involving the collaboration of 250 scientific and clinical researchers. This interaction enhances the quality and scope of basic and clinical research and assists in developing new avenues for the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of cancer and other diseases.

My present role involves working within the newly established core Bioimaging Unit. This is a world-class facility with high specification confocal microscopes, microinjection, flow cytometry and IVIS animal bioluminescence detection capabilities. State-of-the-art image analysis



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software for 3D reconstruction, comparison and image storage is also available. The imaging of specific molecules and their interactions is essential to understand how genomes create cells, and how errant cells cause disease.

The opportunity to attend the Molecular Prevention course coincided with the establishment of CCRCB. Often when working as part of a research team, it is too easy to fail to see the “bigger picture”. Cancer comprises more than one hundred diseases each with its own distinct molecular signature that influences development, progression and ultimately detection, treatment and prevention. Understanding the molecular pathways of tumorigenesis and the current techniques that are being used to analyse them was of particular interest and I also came to appreciate how they help merge basic and clinical science.

One of the key aspects of this course was to emphasise that, as there is a significant disadvantage of working in isolation, a multidisciplinary approach is crucial to the prevention and treatment of disease. Approaches based on technologies such as genomics and proteomics, although state-of-the-art, must complement discipline and disease based strategies to create a translational infrastructure. An understanding of the molecular biology of the cancer cell and its application in areas such as bionutrition, chemoprevention and biomarkers will enhance prediction and prevention of disease.

For me one of the main “take home” messages from the course was the need for development of personalized/tailored prevention strategies for individuals and not the population as a whole. The course provided an excellent opportunity for clinicians, scientists, nutritionists and health promotion personnel to meet in a world-class environment. It facilitated the development of social and professional networking on both a local and international basis. I would highly recommend this course to anyone with an interest in prevention strategies no matter what their discipline. I am deeply grateful to the Research and Development Office of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for providing funding for me to attend.

Mark Catherwood, PhD

Senior Clinical Scientist
Haematology Department
Belfast City Hospital

After obtaining my PhD in Clinical Biochemistry, I was offered a position as a clinical scientist in the Haematology Department of the Belfast City Hospital. The post is a research and development role that investigates the molecular basis of the chronic lymphoproliferative disorders.

I found the NCI summer prevention course an inspirational experience. I was given the opportunity to hear experts in their chosen field give elegant presentations regarding all aspects of cancer prevention and control. I found the quality of the lectures to be of a very high standard, with speakers who were not only approachable but engaged freely in discussions. The staff from the summer



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curriculum was not only extremely helpful but also made us feel very welcomed.

Another bonus for attending a course of this caliber is meeting other health care professional from other countries, who have the same common interests and goals. I found the course immensely satisfying and it has renewed my vigour to try and obtain a sabbatical at NCI. I would thoroughly recommend this course to any health care professional involved in cancer care and prevention to see the visionary work that exists at NCI.

James Canavan, BA, MB, MRCPI

Registrar in Hepatology/Gastroenterology
Department of Gastroenterology
Beaumont Hospital

Following graduation with an honours degree in medicine from Trinity College, Dublin, in 2000, I trained in internal medicine at both St James's Hospital and Beaumont Hospital, Dublin. I achieved my membership of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, by examination, in 2003.

As a Specialist Registrar in Gastroenterology and Internal Medicine, I have a special interest in the diagnosis and management of gastrointestinal cancers and inflammatory bowel disease. Counselling, screening and surveillance for colorectal carcinoma forms a significant part of my workload.

The NCI Summer Curriculum in Cancer Prevention offered an excellent opportunity to learn more about the molecular events in carcinogenesis and metastasis. Outstanding lectures were given by leading cancer researchers.

The emphasis of the course on cancer epidemiology and strategies for cancer prevention was also highly relevant to clinicians. The focus on the "bench to bedside" aspect of basic science research enhanced my understanding of the applicability of basic science research to clinical medicine. Insights gained from this course will also allow me to plan a period of laboratory research in evolving areas of gastrointestinal cancer prevention, which will supplement my clinical training.

The Summer Curriculum also drew together a diverse group of young researchers and clinicians from North America, Ireland and beyond. This allowed us to meet and get to know colleagues from around the world and establish links for future collaborative work. A great deal of both academic and social "cross-pollination" occurred!

The NCI Summer Curriculum in Cancer Prevention has definitely enhanced my clinical practice and improved my understanding of carcinogenesis as a clinical teacher. It also offered an unsurpassed insight into the basic science behind novel and evolving cancer treatments and prevention strategies. I would recommend it wholeheartedly to both clinical and laboratory-based colleagues with an interest in cancer treatment and prevention.

Derek Power, BSc(PHARM), MB, MRCPI

Oncology Department
St James's Hospital

I had the pleasure of attending the NCI Summer Curriculum In Cancer Prevention as a representative from the



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Ireland-Northern Ireland Cancer Consortium. I attended the Molecular Prevention Course from August 2nd to 6th 2004.

I graduated from Trinity College Dublin in 1994 with a BSc in Pharmacy. I then graduated from The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland with an MB in 2001. In 2004 I received my postgraduate degree from The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. Clinical practice began in 2001, and I began working in oncology in 2003. I am now at registrar level in a major academic centre in Dublin, Ireland. My experience in oncology to date is clinical. Clearly if I wish to progress further a period of laboratory-based work is essential. An in-depth understanding of molecular biology, cell signaling pathways, tumourgenesis, targeted therapies etc., is a prerequisite for a future career in medical oncology. The Molecular Prevention Course gave me a unique insight into the way oncology is evolving.

Lectures from prominent figures in the world of molecular research were stimulating and provided me — a clinician — with valuable ideas as to where my career is going. Overviews on such diverse topics as Inflammation and Cancer; The Immune System and Cancer; Molecular Target Identification and Cancer Genetics were well placed and expertly delivered. Discussions form an international audience added to and helped in my understanding of all the information imparted.

I left the NCI with a much clearer understanding of how laboratory-based research is planned and carried out and how molecular mechanisms are playing

and will play a crucial role in the future of oncology. It was a pleasure to have attended this course, and I'm grateful to the NCI and Ireland-Northern Ireland Cancer Consortium for organizing it.

Sharon O'Toole, PhD

Postdoctoral Researcher
Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology
Trinity Centre for Health Sciences
St James's Hospital

I am currently employed as a Post Doctorate Fellow in the Departments of Obstetrics and Gynaecology/ Histopathology in Trinity College Dublin where I am involved in research studies in gynaecological oncology. My PhD concentrated on the treatment of cancer and predicting the response of gynaecological cancers to chemotherapy. With the increasing importance of genetic changes in cancer pathogenesis I felt it was essential for me to gain the theoretical skills that the molecular prevention course offered. Cancer genetics is a rapidly evolving field that has become highly multidisciplinary and the NCI is at the forefront of the cutting-edge technology.

We were presented with a wide variety of topics on cancer prevention and on the various signalling pathways involved in carcinogenesis. Having just started some microarray work and trying to establish the role of the various genes, the course gave a great insight into the pathways these genes are involved in. Also we got to learn about the clinical trials underway in some of the cancer prevention studies so it gives some hope that all this molecular work is not in vain! The course also gave great opportunities for establishing collaborations, even within Ireland, as we are not aware of the



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research going on in the different areas. There were many presentations on ovarian cancer, which have given me some inspiring ideas for future research and perhaps collaboration.

Our departments are currently entering the field of proteomics and the course also provided an excellent background in this area and contact details, which have been invaluable. I would recommend this course to anyone working in the cancer area and the NCI were so professional and helpful towards all the attendees. It is an opportunity not to be missed.

Niamh O'Rourke, RGN, MPH, MSc

Director of Primary Care, Cardiovascular & Cancer Services
Health Services Executive - East Coast Area
Bray, Co Wicklow, Ireland

I trained as a General Nurse at St Vincent's University Hospital in Dublin and spent several years working in intensive care nursing in Ireland, Germany, and Australia. I returned to Ireland to study Tropical Medicine and then spent 2½ years in Cambodia developing primary health care and community development programmes with CONCERN, an Irish NGO.

On return, I completed my MPH in University College Dublin and moved into the field of health promotion, predominantly tobacco control, during which I implemented the first 'smoke free areas in pubs' pilot project in this country. I then undertook an MSc in Health Services Management, incorporating a research project on tobacco advertising. I have since worked as Project Manager for Primary Care, Cardiovascular, Cancer and Palliative Care services for the Health Service Executive.

I applied to attend the summer school in cancer prevention to enhance my skills in the areas of: population health approach to cancer prevention; secondary prevention of cancer; integration of primary and secondary care of cancer; and measuring the effectiveness of prevention programmes.

Since completion of the summer school, I have completed a manual on "GP referral guidelines for suspected cancers"; developed a directory of cancer services in our area; and commenced a feasibility study on the effectiveness of a rehabilitation programme for cancer survivors.

I feel that the summer school has greatly assisted me in promoting an evidence-based approach to cancer services. The NCI facilitated greater access to both published and ongoing research in cancer prevention and has provided a network of colleagues with whom I now collaborate for national and international initiatives.

Gwen Murphy, BA, PhD

Research Associate
Cancer Prevention Institute
Clinical Medicine, Trinity College Dublin
Trinity Centre for Health Sciences
Adelaide and Meath Hospital

In 2004, I completed a PhD in Clinical Medicine at the Cancer Prevention Institute, Trinity College, Adelaide and Meath Hospital, Tallaght under the direction of Professor Colm O'Morain. Himself an Alumnus of the Summer Curriculum and a Cancer Prevention advocate, Colm had suggested early on in my graduate work that I attend the Summer programme. My graduate work involved the recruitment of over 950 patients at the Gastroenterology



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"The air of enthusiasm and passion for the field of cancer prevention was infectious . . ."

Department of the Adelaide and Meath Hospital in a project designed to investigate the role of inflammatory polymorphisms in the pathogenesis of *Helicobacter pylori* related gastric disease, specifically, intestinal metaplasia and non-cardia gastric cancer.

The opportunity to attend the Summer Curriculum came at an ideal point in my career. I was, I think, one of the youngest participants in the five-week course. The exposure to such an impressive team of mentors over the course of the five weeks was perhaps the greatest selling point of the curriculum. Meeting fellow cancer researchers from a myriad of backgrounds and a host of countries across the globe was an incredible experience. The air of enthusiasm and passion for the field of cancer prevention was infectious, even allowing for differing opinions and experiences on the subject. As a Molecular Scientist, epidemiology, public health and population sciences were somewhat uncharted territory and lectures in this area were, for me, the most beneficial. The week spent reviewing site specific cancers was hugely beneficial in providing an overview of cancer outside of those of the gastrointestinal tract.

I believe the most valuable lesson I took back to Ireland and to my continuing studies was the value of international collaboration. Some participants of the course were from countries with perhaps a tenth of Ireland's healthcare budget and yet they were striving to meet international standards of excellence in the areas of cancer research and cancer

prevention with a passion and belief that was admirable to say the least. The NCI had collaborated on many such projects. At their essence, these projects proved the value of education, both of healthcare professionals and of the general public. I continue to recommend the courses to colleagues from a variety of disciplines.