

# State of Cancer/Health Service on the Island of Ireland

## IRELAND

Hospital care for patients with cancer is free at the point of delivery. Forty percent of the 4.1 million Irish citizens have private health insurance, but more than 80 percent of the patients with cancer receive care within the public hospital system. Nearly all cancer care is provided within the country.

Cancer policy in Ireland is strategically developed on a partnership basis involving multi-disciplinary cancer experts, voluntary non-governmental organizations, and health sector experts. In recent years, development in the areas of radiation oncology and breast screening has been significant, in particular the implementation of the National Breast Screening Programme, which includes free screening for women from 50 to 64 years of age.

Based on *The Report on The Development of Radiation Oncology Services in Ireland*, the Irish government acknowledged that there was a need for a major programme to rapidly develop clinical radiation oncology treatment services to current standards. The first phase of this programme is development of a clinical network of large centres in Dublin, Cork, and Galway.

Approximately €550 million (cumulative) has been invested in the development of cancer treatment and care services since the implementation of the 1996 National Cancer Strategy. The Revised Estimate for 2004 shows a total gross estimate of almost €10.08 billion for the health services (€9,570 million current funding and €510

million capital funding), which clearly shows the considerable investment of recent years. Ninety-two additional Consultant posts in key areas of cancer care have been funded through this investment.

A new *National Cancer Strategy* was published in 2004. The new Strategy addresses all aspects of cancer control, sets out key priorities for the development of cancer services in upcoming years, and makes recommendations in relation to the national organisation of cancer services.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

Cancer care is free at the point of delivery for all of Northern Ireland's population of approximately 1.7 million. Screening programmes include breast screening, offered to all women aged 50-64, and population-based cervical screening, available to women over the age of 20. Screening for colorectal cancer is also being considered.

*Cancer Services: Investing for the Future (The Campbell Report)* led to the extensive reorganization of cancer clinical service in Northern Ireland. Besides providing patient-centred service, the new cancer clinical service aims to coordinate cancer treatment, prevention, screening, education, training, and research programmes throughout Northern Ireland. Major outcomes include the development of the cancer centre for Northern Ireland at Belfast City Hospital and the opening of four cancer units in Altnagelvin, Antrim, Ulster, and Craigavon Hospitals.