

with 8.3% of these trials representing incident cancers excluding non-melanoma skin cancer. These figures are based on patient accrual rates for clinical trials open exclusively at the Cancer Centre at Belfast City Hospital. As the Northern Ireland Cancer Trials Network (NICTN) continues to expand, the NICCTU is expected to reach a target goal of 10% patient accrual during 2009. To date, NICTN activities focused primarily on staff induction and training, with a select number of non-complex cancer trials now open for accrual.

In 2008, the NICCTU faced and overcame a number of staffing and hiring challenges. Dedicated clinical research nurses were appointed in the Cancer Units based at Antrim Area Hospital, Craigavon Area Hospital, Ulster Hospital, and at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. An additional clinical research nurse will be appointed at Altnagelvin Area Hospital in spring 2009.

Also during 2008, the NICCTU was involved in a number of ECMC network activities, including the ECMC Nurse Network Meeting, the ECMC Bioanalytical and Quality Assurance Meeting, and the Data Management Network Meeting. The NIECMC played a key role in brokering a pioneering collaboration between the pharmaceutical company, AstraZeneca International, the National Cancer Research Institute, and the ECMC network. The NICCTU is currently involved in three out of thirteen novel phase II studies in the NCRI colorectal and lung portfolios.

In addition, the NICCTU continued to promote all-Ireland clinical trials collaboration with U.K. and U.S. counterparts, through its partnership with ICORG. In 2008, the NICCTU's relationship with ICORG facilitated increased involvement in ECOG studies, as the NICCTU was

selected as an ECOG registered clinical trials site. The first ECOG clinical trial will open in Belfast, in early 2009.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Professor Donal Hollywood, Chair

Each year, the Information Technology Working Group (IT WG) works to expand existent technological capabilities and build new information sharing infrastructures that enhance communication between medical and scientific communities on the island of Ireland. The IT WG also works to facilitate training and education programs, support the coordination of clinical trials, ensure effective data management, and strengthen health care delivery systems across the island of Ireland.

TELESYNERGY®

The IT WG focused its efforts during 2008 on further deploying the TELESYNERGY® system within the National Cancer Control Network in Ireland. The TELESYNERGY® system, a multimedia medical imaging and conferencing system developed by the NIH's Center for Information Technology (CIT), enhances collaboration among Consortium partners on a variety of projects and activities across the island of Ireland and throughout the U.S.



TELESYNERGY® installation in
Beaumont Hospital, Dublin.

In August 2008, the TELESYNERGY® system was successfully implemented at Beaumont Hospital in Dublin. Beaumont Hospital was recently identified by the HSE as one of eight core cancer centers that will form the nexus of future cancer treatment services within the rapidly developing NCCP. In addition, Beaumont Hospital will be one of four major sites comprising the forthcoming National Network and Programme for Radiation Oncology. For further information on TELESYNERGY® use at Beaumont Hospital, please visit <http://telesynergy.nih.gov/beaumont.html>.

Currently, the TELESYNERGY® system is operational in all major NCCP hospitals in Ireland. The NCCP initiated a review in late 2008 to identify remaining hospital sites that may benefit from TELESYNERGY®. It is expected that review of the entire network will be completed in 2009.

The TELESYNERGY® system facilitated an increasing range of activities and services in 2008, including:

- Inter-hospital telemedicine meetings, including most tumor board and oncology multidisciplinary meetings.
- Joint educational activities with Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto, Canada.
- All committee meetings of the Irish Institute of Radiography.

Additionally, the TELESYNERGY® network continued to facilitate the development and extension of education and training programs in 2008. The Faculty of Radiologists in Ireland, in conjunction with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, offers a diverse variety of post-graduate training programs in the field of radiology and other areas, including radiation protection and alternative methods of imaging. The TELESYNERGY®

network enabled the Faculty of Radiologists in Ireland to make the Fellowships in Radiation Oncology program available at University College Hospital, Galway, after the hospital received accreditation to participate in the national training program in 2008. TELESYNERGY® also facilitates the availability of specific fellowship training program modules in diagnostic imaging, which are also coordinated by the Faculty of Radiologists in Ireland.

In late 2008, NIH's CIT and TCD's Division of Radiation Therapy commenced discussions on enabling a Material Transfer Agreement contract that would enable the exchange of custom TELESYNERGY® software between the two institutions. This exciting development is expected to foster new opportunities for the development of collaborative research projects, as well as continued optimization and advancement of the TELESYNERGY® system.

In light of the advanced stage of the TELESYNERGY® network's development in Ireland, the IT WG plans to undertake a review of potential new projects, including the opportunity to interface with international elements of NCI's cancer Biomedical Informatics Grid (caBIG®) project and facilitate information and communications technology components within forthcoming cancer biobanking efforts in Ireland.

NURSING Professor Martin Bradley, Chair

The Nursing Working Group (NRS WG) was initially established with the aim of addressing a shortage of oncology-trained nurses across the island of Ireland. NRS WG membership is comprised of oncology nurses, clinicians, educators, and public health managers from the three partnering jurisdictions. To date, the NRS WG has

focused its collective efforts on expanding educational and training opportunities to augment the Consortium's research and development agenda.

CLINICAL TRIALS E-LEARNING MODULE

Following a successful launch in 2007, QUB continued to offer the Clinical Trials E-learning Module. Thirteen students completed the program in May 2008. Feedback on the course remains highly positive. Students generally reported that they found the module to be informative, indicating that the resources provided were helpful and relevant to their respective roles as clinical trials nurses and coordinators.

NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE CLINICAL TRIALS TRAINING FOR NURSES EVALUATION

In 2008, the NRS WG agreed to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the 2007 NCI Clinical Trials Training for Nurses, to inform and enhance future clinical trials training programs. An experienced group of nursing experts spearheaded the evaluation. The evaluation process included a detailed survey completed by participants, interviews with their managing supervisors, and a focus group session at the 4th AICC in Dublin. The outcome of the evaluation has been very encouraging, resulting in a series of recommendations, which will be provided in 2009 to the Consortium's BOD for further consideration.

NURSING RESEARCH COLLABORATION

Over the course of the year, the NRS WG continued to discuss ways for sparking productive research collaboration across the island of Ireland. The group is currently considering a number of proposals as a result of these discussions. In particular, the group introduced a TELESYNERGY® educational series for cancer nurses. A pilot

event took place on 27 May 2008 at Belfast City Hospital, attracting approximately thirty participants from across the island of Ireland. At this event, Consortium Summer Curriculum in Cancer scholar, Dr. Joanne Reid, offered a presentation entitled "Patient Experience of Cancer Cachexia," which featured findings from her PhD research. (Reid J, McKenna H, Fitzsimons D, McCance T. The experience of cancer cachexia: A qualitative study of advanced cancer patients and their family members. 2008 December. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*. PMID: 19081090.) Following the initial success of the pilot event, a second installment in the TELESYNERGY® educational series was launched on 24 November 2008 and included a teleconference link to NCI. Thirty participants heard Ms. Freda Clinton, president of the Irish Association for Nurses in Oncology, present a talk on the "Implementation and Communication of Policy on Febrile Neutropenia from Tertiary Centre Shared Care." Four additional TELESYNERGY® events are being planned for 2009.

CHIEF NURSING OFFICERS VISIT NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

In March 2008, an all-Ireland nursing delegation led by the CNOs of Ireland and Northern Ireland, Ms. Sheila O'Malley and Professor Martin Bradley respectively, visited the NIH in Bethesda, Maryland under the auspices of the Consortium. Ms. O'Malley and Professor Bradley were accompanied by Sarah Condell, nursing research advisor; Mary Day, nurse advisor to the CNO of Ireland; and Margaret O'Hagan, nursing officer to the DHSSPS in Northern Ireland. This visit provided delegates with an opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of the important work being conducted at NCI, as well as the types of programs offered to clinical trials nurses from the island of Ireland.