

# Year in Review Our Programs in Practice

Scholar Exchange

Cancer Registries/  
Epidemiology

Clinical Trials

Information Technology

Nursing

Prevention

Additional Initiatives

## SCHOLAR EXCHANGE

Professor Mark Lawler, Chair

With funding from the HRB, the HSC R&D Office, and the NCI, the Consortium facilitates and promotes a range of scholar exchange opportunities each year that range from health economics fellowships to cancer prevention training and programs. In partnership with the NCI, the Consortium provides fellowship awards to qualified island of Ireland nurses, oncologists, researchers, and other professionals to travel, study, and conduct research on the island of Ireland and in the U.S.

2008 was an active year for the SE WG. Professor Mark Lawler, director of Postgraduate Teaching and Learning at the Trinity Centre for Health Sciences at St. James's Hospital, assumed chairmanship of the SE WG, succeeding Professor Patrick Johnston of QUB. A number of joint SE WG activities took place throughout the year. Several of these activities are highlighted below.

- The JRPC, an initiative driven by the SE WG to foster closer research relationships between all-Ireland researchers and researchers in NCI-funded laboratories, was launched and five grants were awarded to PIs in Ireland, Northern Ireland, and the U.S. Five U.S. PIs, Drs. Christian Abnet, Catherine Bradley, Courtney Broaddus, Stephen Chanock, and John Grealley, will join five all-Ireland PIs, Professor Liam Murray, Dr. Linda Sharp, Dr. Dean Fennell, Professor Ken Mills, and Dr. Charles Spillane, to work jointly on a specific research project. Research projects will address topics such as the genetic variants associated with acute myeloid leukemia. For more information about the JRPC awards, visit [http://www.allirelandnci.org/fellowships\\_and\\_training/joint\\_research\\_fellowships.shtml](http://www.allirelandnci.org/fellowships_and_training/joint_research_fellowships.shtml).

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- Cancer 2008, the 6<sup>th</sup> International Cancer Conference of St. James's Hospital, took place at Dublin Castle in May 2008. The theme of the 2008 conference was "Striving for Success in Cancer Care." This conference, now a regular annual event in Ireland, is co-sponsored by the NCI, St. James's Hospital, and TCD. It attracts hundreds of cancer experts to Dublin each year to discuss current research developments and share solutions for challenges faced by public health professionals to deliver world-class cancer care to patients. For more information about the next Cancer conference, visit <http://www.cancerconference.ie/>.
- Twenty-four all-Ireland applicants were selected to participate in the NCI Summer Curriculum in Cancer Prevention in 2008. Since the program's inception in 2000, 196 participants from the island of Ireland have completed the courses, reflecting the NCI's, the HRB's, and the HSC R&D's commitment to improving the cadre of cancer prevention professionals on the island of Ireland. For more information about the NCI Summer Curriculum in Cancer Prevention program, visit [http://www.allirelandnci.com/fellowships\\_and\\_training/nci\\_summer\\_curriculum.shtml](http://www.allirelandnci.com/fellowships_and_training/nci_summer_curriculum.shtml).
- As part of the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance (DRHEA) and in association with the NCI, a Cancer Genomics MasterClass took place at the Institute of Molecular Medicine at TCD on 4 December 2009. The MasterClass had significant NCI representation and attracted a widespread audience from institutions across the

island of Ireland and the U.S. to hear the latest developments in the rapidly advancing field of cancer genomics.

- In conjunction with the Consortium-sponsored 4<sup>th</sup> AICC, IACR hosted a mini-symposium entitled “Cancer Biology Informs Cancer Medicine.” IACR is an all-Ireland non-profit organization for cancer researchers in the Irish biomedical community. The mini-symposium showcased the best and the brightest from the research community in Ireland and included a number of speakers from the NCI. Additional information about IACR can be found at <http://www.ia-cr.ie>.

During 2008, SE WG membership was reconstituted with representation invited from other Consortium Working Groups, as well as the HRB in Ireland and the HSC R&D Office in Northern Ireland. At the 4<sup>th</sup> AICC, the SE WG met for a highly successful meeting, during which the group developed a strategy for intensifying scholar exchange and training efforts in the coming years.

## CANCER REGISTRIES/ EPIDEMIOLOGY

Dr. Anna Gavin, Chair

The Consortium BOD established the Cancer Registries Working Group (CR WG) to coordinate cooperative efforts between the cancer registries of Ireland and Northern Ireland. In addition to facilitating training and furthering the education of cancer epidemiologists, the CR WG works to develop joint programs to assist researchers in gaining a more complete understanding of cancer rates, trends, and outcomes across the island of Ireland. In 2008, the cancer registries in Ireland and Northern Ireland continued to collaborate on a number of projects in the areas of

prostate cancer, pancreatic cancer, Barrett’s esophagus, and esophageal cancer. Further details on some of these collaborations are provided below.

### 4<sup>TH</sup> ALL-IRELAND CANCER CONFERENCE

The pivotal event of 2008 was the 4<sup>th</sup> AICC held in Dublin, 30 November through 3 December. The conference, organized by a scientific committee led by Dr. Harry Comber, director of the NCRI, showcased the Consortium’s collaborative endeavors of the past nine years. Conference sessions covered a variety of diverse topics, such as biobanking, molecular mechanisms in cancer development, clinical trials, and survivorship. Current and past NCI CFPF fellows provided presentations about their research with NCI investigators. The 4<sup>th</sup> AICC featured 117 posters from researchers who presented their ongoing work in the areas of basic science, clinical science, nursing science, and cancer prevention and population health on the island of Ireland. Winners and their poster titles in each category are listed below:

**Basic science:** Dr. Martin Barr for *Vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) and the Epigenetic Regulation of its Receptors in Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer*.

**Clinical science:** Dr. Purna Tewari for *Investigations of Genetic Variation in DNA Repair Genes and Disease Susceptibility to Multiple Myeloma by Application of a Candidate Pathway Strategy*.

**Nursing Science:** Dr. Cherith Semple for *Evaluation of a Problem-Focused Intervention Programme for Patients with Head and Neck Cancer*.

**Prevention and population health:** Ms. Tess Clendenen for *Vitamin D and Risk of Epithelial Ovarian Cancer*.

### 3<sup>RD</sup> ALL-IRELAND CANCER STATISTICS REPORT

During 2008, Dr. David Donnelly of the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry (NICR) conducted extensive analysis of the all-Ireland cancer data collected in 2007 for the 3<sup>rd</sup> All-Ireland Cancer Statistics Report. The report will be publicly released in April 2009.

### IRELAND-NORTHERN IRELAND COOPERATION RESEARCH PROJECT GRANT

Since August 2005, the research project grant “Factors underlying differences and trends in prostate-specific antigen (PSA) testing, biopsy and prostate cancer incidence in Ireland 1994-2003” has been funded jointly by the HRB in Ireland and the DHSSPS in Northern Ireland. During 2008, the NCRI and the NICR continued to collaborate on this project to investigate varying prostate cancer incidence trends in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

In cooperation with colleagues from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), Ms. Anne-Elie Carsin of the NCRI has been leading a collaborative analysis of trends in prostate cancer incidence and mortality in Ireland and Northern Ireland. This work centers on Irish data, compiled by cancer registries in the north and south, garnered from PSA tests and prostatic biopsies since the mid-1990s. This data has been invaluable in facilitating the interpretation of trends in incidence and mortality.

### ALL-IRELAND PANCREATIC CASE CONTROL STUDY 2006-2009

In 2008, recruitment efforts for the All-Ireland Pancreatic Case Control Study (PanCAM) continued. This study, coordinated by Dr. Linda Sharp of the NCRI and Professor Liam Murray of the Cancer