

National Cancer Research Institute NEWSLETTER

MAY 2008



New Chair for NCR I

NCR I welcomes Professor Sir Kenneth Calman as its new Chair. He has succeeded Professor Mike Richards, who steps down after two years in the role. Professor Richards will continue to be on the NCR I Board.



Kenneth Calman graduated in medicine from the University of Glasgow and became Professor of Oncology there in 1974. In 1984 he was appointed Dean of Postgraduate Medicine and Professor of Postgraduate Medical Education and was Consultant Physician at Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow. In 1989 he was appointed Chief Medical Officer in Scotland and in September 1991 he became Chief Medical Officer in England. He was a member of the Executive Board of the World Health Organisation and its Chairman from 1998–99. He was Vice Chancellor and Warden of the University of Durham from 1998 until 2007. He was also a Member of the Statistics Commission from 1999 until 2007 and was made a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath in 1996.

In his role as Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Calman co-authored a report which recommended the radical restructuring of cancer services to improve treatment outcomes and reduce inequalities. The report, known as 'Calman-Hine' was the precursor to the government's Cancer Plan for England, which delivered this restructuring and has since gone on to shape the Cancer Reform Strategy.

Currently, Sir Kenneth is Chancellor of Glasgow University and a Trustee for Cancer Research UK. In July 2008 he will become President of the British Medical Association for one year. In addition to his varied and active roles in medicine and cancer, Ken is also a member of the Board of the British Library.

Publication of NCR I's new Strategic Plan

Strategy discussions among NCR I partners, and consultations with the research community as well as patients and carers involved in research, have culminated in a plan for the next 5 years. NCR I will continue to grow and sustain the areas championed in its early years, including prevention research, supportive and palliative care, and lung cancer research. Some new themes will also be pursued, in particular cancer survivorship and research aimed at achieving earlier diagnosis of cancer. These are also areas highlighted as important in the Cancer Reform Strategy for the NHS in England, published in December 2007. NCR I partners will work closely with the NHS in all parts of the UK in taking forward these new initiatives.

Planning for research on survivorship has already begun with a 'Think Tank' meeting hosted jointly by Macmillan Cancer Support

and the NHS in March. This meeting highlighted the issues we will face as our demography changes to a population with more older people and when a greater proportion of those diagnosed with cancer will go on to survive beyond their initial treatment. Little is known about the needs of these patients though there is some evidence that they are greater than patients with other chronic diseases. A number of areas were identified for research, development and early implementation, and the research component will be subject to further planning by NCR I partners during the course of this year.

The Strategic Plan can be accessed electronically at http://www.ncri.org.uk/includes/Publications/reports/strategicplan_web.pdf and hard copies are available on request from info@ncri.org.uk

Inside this issue:

- **Coordination of Biobanking in Europe**
- **Official launch of the National Cancer Intelligence Network**
- **Driving PET research forward**
- **Translational Research Forums**
- **New website for the ECMC network**
- **Consumer input into the NCR I Board Sub-Group**
- **Pathology and Research Task Force**
- **Informatics Summit**
- **NCR I Cancer Conference 2008**



Coordination of Biobanking in Europe

While NCRI aims to facilitate joint working in the UK through its Confederation of Cancer Biobanks, a much more ambitious plan is taking shape at European level. A number of scientific infrastructure programmes are being developed under the EU's Seventh Framework Programme, including one known as BBMRI which is the acronym for Biobanking and BioMolecular Resources Research Infrastructure. BBMRI aims to develop a federated 'distributed hub' structure of biobanks in order to overcome fragmentation and align working practices. It is not restricted to any disease or type of biobank. BBMRI held a meeting for over 100 participants and other interested parties in Florence in April, which was attended by a small number of UK delegates including Jane Cope of NCRI and Anne Carter of onCore UK.

Delegates heard about the main workstreams for the preparatory phase of the initiative which will run for 2 years. These include consideration of issues relating to population-based biobanks, disease-oriented biobanks, biomolecular

resources and molecular tools, database harmonisation and IT infrastructures, ethical legal and societal issues, and funding & financing. The intention is to build on, and join up, existing initiatives rather than to impose a completely new structure. Governance arrangements are at an early stage of development and the challenge will be to achieve the right combination of grass roots encouragement and top-down leadership. On the second day of the meeting a number of delegates had the opportunity to present brief information about their existing activities to network biobanks. The NCRI Confederation was one of a number of national and local initiatives to be highlighted, together showing great potential for coordination whilst also illustrating the immensity of the task ahead.

The preparatory phase will be followed by construction and operation phases. BBMRI is expected to run for at least 10 years.

More information about BBMRI is available at www.biobanks.eu

Official launch of the National Cancer Intelligence Network

The National Cancer Intelligence Network (NCIN) will be launched officially in June 2008. The network has been established jointly by the NHS and NCRI to develop a new national information resource to promote the development of cancer services and provide a platform for high quality epidemiology and health services research relating to cancer.



The NCIN will coordinate the collection, analysis and publication of comparative national information on diagnosis, treatment and outcomes for cancer, in a way which is useful to patients, commissioners, service providers, researchers and other interested parties. Data sets will be brought together from a variety of sources and linked in new ways, providing the opportunity to generate new information.

The NCIN will be hosting a launch event, Transforming Data into Action, taking place at the Hilton London Metropole on Wednesday 18th June 2008 from 10am to 4pm

This important event will set out the initial agenda and role for the NCIN. It will describe and examine proposed changes in cancer data collection, and will focus on the analysis which NCIN will provide in its first year, 2008–09. It will also be explained how the Network will promote research.

Details on how to register for the event can be found at www.ncin.org.uk If you have any queries concerning registration please contact Liz Moss at EventproUK who are organizing the event on our behalf: liz@eventprouk.com or telephone 0845 838 5188.

Driving PET research forward

Following its report last year, NCRI has now set up the UK PET Research Steering Committee, chaired by Professor Sir Michael Peckham, to stimulate and support the build-up of a UK research programme in PET that is novel in approach, relevant to the use of PET in translational research as well as its direct application in the clinic, and internationally competitive.

Membership of the committee reflects the main themes relevant to PET and further details can be found on the website: <http://www.ncri.org.uk/default.asp?s=1&p=5&ss=2>

The executive function for the committee is being provided by Professor Ken Miles (Brighton and Sussex Medical School), Professor Fiona Gilbert (University of Aberdeen) and Dr Paul Marsden (King's College London). They will provide a conduit for bi-directional communication with the research community and other stakeholders, working to facilitate the flow of information and acting as a catalyst in taking forward priority themes.

Three work-streams have been defined:

- Trials network and technology development (Lead, Dr Paul Marsden, paul.marsden@kcl.ac.uk)
- Increasing the adoption of PET into NCRN and other Phase 3 trials in oncology (Lead, Prof. Ken Miles, K.A.Miles@bsms.ac.uk)
- Stimulating early phase research using PET (Lead, Prof. Fiona Gilbert, f.j.gilbert@abdn.ac.uk)

Work-plans are being developed and activities will include:

- Setting up a collaborative network to facilitate high quality multi-centre trials using PET
- Providing support and advice on funding issues – particularly accessing the NHS costs of research
- Determining the suitability of mobile scanners for research use
- Identifying the next generation of tracers and working to make these available.

The executive team, or Network Leads as they have become known, will be provided with scientific and administrative support; these staff will be recruited soon.

Translational Research Forums

In January, the NCRI and Experimental Cancer Medicine Centres (ECMC) network held a second successful Early Clinical Trials Forum (ECTF) at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London.

The plenary session featured talks on immunotherapy, imaging and the development of combination therapies, and included speakers from both academia and industry. In the afternoon delegates were invited to attend workshops on immunotherapeutics, translational radiotherapy and on Cancer Research UK's Phase 1/2 Committee and Drug Development Office trials.

Feedback from the Forum, which was attended by over 150 delegates including academic researchers, representatives from industry, research nurses and consumers, was very positive on the quality of the talks and the value of the networking lunch.

Registration for the second Late Phase Trials Forum (LPTF), scheduled for 26 June 2008 at the Royal College of Physicians, is now open. To see the programme and to register for the LPTF please visit us at www.ncri.org.uk/ctf. The theme of the LPTF plenary session is 'The Phase 2/3 transition in oncology' and will highlight the issues and challenges of this transition from the

perspective of a number of different cancer types. We shall also be holding three afternoon workshops on

- 1 Challenges for biomarkers in Phase 3 trials
- 2 Translational research in surgical cancer trials, and
- 3 The role of research nurses in Phase 3 trials.

Information about all Forum meetings, past and future, is available at www.ncri.org.uk/ctf

Consumer input into the NCRI Board Sub-Group

Following an open call for consumer members, Miriam Harris and Peter Rainey have been appointed to the Board Sub-Group on Clinical and Translational Research (<http://www.ncri.org.uk/default.asp?s=0&p=5>) and recently participated in their first meeting.



Miriam is a breast cancer patient and has experience of social and medical research in a number of topics. Until recently, Miriam was the Project Director of the Whitehall II study which has followed the health of a cohort of 10,000 civil servants using questionnaire and medical screening to look at the links between stress and health, particularly heart disease but also diabetes, cancer and cognitive function. Miriam told us "I was looking for opportunities to use my skills and experience and saw the Sub-Group as an ideal combination. The first meeting was a challenge – so many acronyms! – but I'm looking forward to future activities."



Peter was diagnosed with a rare form of lung cancer in 2004. His professional career in sales, marketing, training and consultancy has greatly facilitated an increasing involvement in patient advocacy, working with both the Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation and the UK Advisory Group for COMPASS, one of the NCRI collaborative groups for supportive and palliative care research. As he told us "Membership of the NCRI Board Sub-Group is a real opportunity to represent patients at a strategic level and I hope to make a contribution to the development of a better future for cancer patients."

New website for the Experimental Cancer Medicine Centre network

We are pleased to announce that the Experimental Cancer Medicine Centre (ECMC) network website is now available at www.ecmcnetwork.org.uk. The site contains information on each of the 19 ECMCs and all the activities of the network.



For each ECMC, the members and their areas of expertise are listed in addition to the Centre's key goals and objectives, together with details of the technology and equipment available at that Centre. Information relating to all ECMC network meetings including the work of the ECMC Bio-analysis and QA (BAQA), Data Managers and Nurse Network groups can also be found on the website.

The ECMC network is underpinned by the ECMC Secretariat which is based at Cancer Research UK and led by Dr Louise Jones. The Secretariat also includes Dr Abigail Evans who will lead on consumer involvement within the ECMC network, Ms Heather Slade, Research Officer and Ms Katie Wallis as Group Administrator.

For more information on the activities of the ECMC network and the work of the ECMC Secretariat please go to www.ecmcnetwork.org.uk



Pathology and Research Task Force

Translational research, which combines clinical and laboratory data to develop new therapies and diagnostic tools, has been highlighted as a priority for UK health research. Such research underpins the goal of personalised medicine and frequently requires access to well-preserved human biological samples, many of which arise from NHS patients and reside in the custody of NHS pathology departments. Sometimes the research is conducted in these departments but more often it requires collaboration between the pathologists and other researchers.

Researchers have reported to NCRI that it is sometimes difficult to get the support of pathologists and to establish access to samples. The reasons for the difficulties are complex and include resource constraints, a decline in academic pathology, the lack of incentives for research, and difficulties relating to the regulatory environment. Work is required to establish effective solutions and a number of stakeholders will need to come together for action to be effective. To this end, NCRI has set up a Task Force, chaired by Professor David Levison, to foster the role of pathology services in research.

An initial meeting held in February discussed all the issues and concluded that there is a willingness in many quarters to help break down these barriers. Four work-streams, on the academic pathology workforce, individual incentives for research, financial and physical resources and education have been set up as a result. The Task Force is expecting to report in the autumn.

Anyone who would like to be involved with the Task Force should contact Rebecca Stratford at rebecca.stratford@ncri.org.uk

Informatics Summit



The NCRI Informatics Initiative hosted a

Summit in February to explore areas of common interest between industry and academia in developing a unified approach to handling the large amounts of valuable, but under-used, information that is accumulating in the public domain.

The meeting was chaired by Professor Sir Alex Markham, Chair of the NCRI Informatics Management Board. Representatives were present from AstraZeneca, GlaxoSmithKline, Lilly UK, Merck Serono, Merck Sharp and Dohme, Novartis, Pfizer, Roche Products and UCB, all participating alongside experts from the NHS and academia.

Speakers highlighted progress towards maximising the value of data and the benefits that can come from working together towards harmonised standards and protocols. These included presentations from Dr Ken Buetow on the caBIG™ initiative, which aims to connect the US cancer research community through a shareable, interoperable infrastructure, Mr Chris Carrigan on the National Cancer

Intelligence Network, Professor Ian Diamond on planning for the use of electronic patient records in research and Professor Phil Quirke on the use of informatics to facilitate the use of imaging in pathology. These talks were followed by a structured discussion of the approaches being taken by individual companies, their perceptions on unmet needs and what they would like to see achieved.

The meeting provided a wealth of opportunities for engagement with industry on a variety of levels. These included options for collaboration on research projects and the opportunity to explore pre-competitive areas whilst demonstrating the benefits of data sharing and the adoption of common standards. A high level of pharma engagement with the initiative was evident, both from the discussion at the Summit itself and subsequent active investigation of funding opportunities by a number of companies. Professor Sir Alex Markham closed the meeting by emphasizing collaboration as the means to successful progress.

Further information on the Informatics Initiative can be found at <http://www.cancerinformatics.org.uk/>



www.ncri.org.uk/finder

Search the Web with NCRI Finder

The NCRI Finder search engine enables cross-site searching of organisations involved in the cancer research field. From research paper abstracts to announcements of new clinical trials, you will be able to find all the information you need.



Important dates for the 2008 NCRI Cancer Conference

Monday 19 May: Abstract submission deadline

Monday 2 June: Registration opens

Friday 27 June: Consumer bursary deadline

Monday 7 July: Late-breaking abstract submission opens

www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference

Thursday 31 July: Earlybird registration deadline

Monday 4 August: Late-breaking abstract submission deadline

Monday 1 September: Online registration deadline

Sunday 5 October: NCRI Cancer Conference commences



If you have any comments or news stories for inclusion in future editions of the NCRI newsletter, please contact: info@ncri.org.uk