

# NSW CANCER TRIALS NETWORK NEWS



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**Happy New Year!** Welcome to the first edition of NSW Cancer Trials Network News. This bi-monthly newsletter will provide information for people working in the NSW Cancer Trials network.

**Message from Jim Bishop AO MD MMed MBBS FRACP FRCPA  
Chief Cancer Officer and CEO, Cancer Institute NSW**

## Cancer Clinical Trials in NSW and the UK

Clinical trial activity in cancer has been increasing in NSW since 2004. There was an increase in patients enrolled from 952 in 2004 to 2,131 in 2007, or an increase of 124 per cent. There was also a rise in the number of patients active on cancer trials, including new enrolments and those already on follow up, from 4,097 in 2004 to 6,491 in 2007. This represents an increase of 58 per cent. The number of trials open has also risen, from 175 in 2004 to 285 in 2007. The number of trials has increased in nine out of 10 clinical groupings. There were increases in enrolments to trials in breast cancer, haematological malignancies and melanoma. New trials and trial enrolments need to be further encouraged in bowel cancer, respiratory cancers and urogenital cancers.

The projected number of new cancers in NSW for 2007 is 37,550. This suggests that in 2007 around 6 per cent of incident cases were enrolled on clinical trials and 17 per cent of incident cancer cases were active on trials, either accrued or on active follow up.

I have recently had the opportunity to be part of a formal review panel established by the British Government to review cancer trials in the UK. The National Cancer Research Network (NCRN) in

England has been a model which has assisted the development of the NSW Cancer Trials Network. The NCRN has been in existence since 2000. It currently enters

around 14 per cent of incident cancer cases in England onto clinical trials each year. The number of trials open to accrual in the NCRN is about the same as in NSW currently, although numbers accrued in England are larger.

NCRN has introduced a number of major innovations recently. These include education and networking of the local clinical trial research managers across England. Trials units and centres have been 'clustered', with similar organisations for reporting and training, taking into account university teaching hospital environments, regional or rural locality.

This clustering has allowed trial unit and network managers to meet to solve problems of common interest relevant to their local environment. *Continued on page 2*



If you have any comments, feedback or suggestions for inclusion, we'd love to hear from you.

Contact: Helen Fraser, Manager Clinical Trials Program Coordination  
Cancer Institute NSW · PO Box 41 · Alexandria NSW 2145

Phone: 02 8374 3548 Fax: 02 8374 5778 Email: [helen.fraser@cancerinstitute.org.au](mailto:helen.fraser@cancerinstitute.org.au)

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A further innovation is to accept industry sponsored trials as well as investigator initiated trials. This has provided the NCRN with access to a number of new drugs and biological agents that are particularly promising and not available for study otherwise.

Finally, the NCRN is now supporting a number of cancer prevention and screening trials. These trials now constitute a substantial proportion of patients accrued, given the large numbers of patients that are needed for such trials.

The UK has developed a National Health Service-sponsored general clinical trials structure, based on NCRN, for other types of diseases. This expansion has included the development of a primary care clinical trials network. The NCRN has established a couple of specific cancer trials in primary practice as part of this collaboration. This is an area of need for clinical research in NSW. The Clinical Trials Business Development Unit at the Cancer Institute NSW is working with networks of other key diseases and exploring opportunities in primary care.

The funding of the NCRN is also a model that should be examined for its relevance in Australia. The funding is via the National Cancer Research Institute and recently has further support from the NHS. However, the funding consortium of national and devolved governments, cancer charities, MRC and industry is a successful and stable funding model now into its ninth year.

The lesson I would draw from our experience with the NSW Clinical Trials Network is that the NCRN concept works in a different setting and it can increase trial activity. The major challenges going forward will be adequate commercial investment in clinical research this year and our ability to improve the timeliness of governance approvals within our system so we can be competitive internationally.

## Innovations in Clinical Trials

### **New Award: NSW Cancer Trials Unit Innovation Award**

The Cancer Institute NSW Clinical Trials Unit Innovation Award will recognise the achievements or activities undertaken by staff within a cancer clinical trials unit, which demonstrate innovation in relation to the conduct of clinical trials.

Areas of innovation may include: increasing access to clinical trials, strategies to address under-represented groups (tumour groups, populations), promoting a research culture, collaboration, developing training opportunities and community involvement. The Award will be announced at the Cancer Institute NSW 2009 Premier's Award for Outstanding Cancer Research on 21 May at the Sydney Exhibition and Convention Centre's Parkside Ballroom.

### **NSW Cancer Trials Network Innovations Forum**

**When: 21 May 2009**

**Time: 12:30–5:00pm**

**Where: Sydney**

This forum will be an exciting opportunity to meet with clinical trials colleagues from across NSW and to share innovative ideas from your own workplace.

Financial support will be available for staff working in regional cancer trials units to attend.

More information to come...

## NSW Cancer Trials Steering Group

The NSW Cancer Trials Steering Group held its first meeting on 18 December 2008.

The aims of the group are to provide:

- Strategic direction on initiatives to increase access to high quality clinical trials for cancer patients in NSW.
- Leadership to the NSW Cancer Trials Network.
- Advice to the clinical trials program at the CINSW.

Meetings will be held every two months and outcomes of the meetings will be communicated via this newsletter.

Members of the Steering Group include:

<b>Prof. Robyn Ward:</b>	Chair, Director Area Cancer Services, SESIAHS
<b>Dr Monica Robotin:</b>	Medical Director, The Cancer Council NSW
<b>A/Prof Martin Stockler:</b>	Oncology Program Co-Director, NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre
<b>Dr Peter Wejhora:</b>	Director, Research Division, Cancer Institute NSW

Members selected from the submitted Expressions of Interest (EOI)

<b>Ms Sally Dean:</b>	Clinical Research Support Office Manager, HNEAHS
<b>Dr Peter Grimison:</b>	Staff Specialist, Medical Oncology, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital

The focus of the first meeting was to review the submitted EOI. To ensure the Group maintains a strategic focus, membership will be kept small. However, everyone who submitted an EOI has been invited to become Associate Members of the Steering Group. These Associate Members will be asked to provide feedback on discussion papers and to assist the Steering Group with the implementation of activities and initiatives within the NSW Cancer Trials Network.

## InfoEd Clinical Trials Module

Many of you would be aware that the Cancer Institute NSW is in the process of implementing an IT software system, called InfoEd, which will support several programs within the Research Division, including Ethics, Grants Administration and Clinical Trials.

The clinical trials module is for managing the clinical trials process at the site and will be available for use by cancer trials units (CTU), who receive grant funding administered by the Cancer Institute NSW. In addition, the clinical trials activity reporting will be facilitated through the InfoEd Clinical Trials Module.

An InfoEd Clinical Trials Working Group was established in August 2008, with representatives from metropolitan and regional CTU. The Working Group has provided invaluable feedback to the Cancer Institute NSW on different aspects of the system, including the clinical trials process design, configuration requirements, implementation, training and support needs. A major milestones in the project will start on 23 February 2009, when representatives from InfoEd USA will be on site at the Cancer Institute NSW to configure the system. We are extremely grateful to the trial nurses and data managers from the Working Group who have agreed to attend sessions throughout the week to provide their input in to how the system should 'look'.

A rolling implementation plan is being finalised; where by a pre-defined number of CTU will be brought on line at one time, followed by the next group and so on. This approach will ensure all CTU receive the necessary training and support required for the successful implementation of the InfoEd Clinical Trials module.

## Grants Secretariat Update

### Congratulations

The Cancer Institute NSW Clinical Trials Grants Review Committee met in December 2008 and reviewed more than 40 applications for funding to support the employment of clinical trials nurses/data managers for up to two years.

Congratulations to the following investigators who were successful:

#### Clinical Trial Grants: Existing Units

**A/Prof Anne Hamilton:** Sydney Cancer Centre, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, SSWAHS

**Dr Michael Harvey:** St George & Sutherland Cancer Trials Unit, SESIAHS

**Prof Michael Soloman:** Cancer Surgery Trials Unit, SSWAHS

#### Clinical Trials Grants: Establishing Units

**Dr Meera Agar:** Palliative Care Service Clinical Trials Unit, Western Zone, SSWAHS

**Dr Michael Bourke:** Endoscopy Unit, Westmead Hospital, SSWAHS

**A/Prof Stephen Della-Forentine:** Southern Highlands Cancer Centre, Southern Highlands Private Hospital

#### NSW Cancer Council supported Trials Nurse and Data Manager Grants

**Prof Michael Friedlander:** Clinical Cancer Research Unit, Prince of Wales Hospital, SESIAHS

**Prof John Thompson:** Sydney Melanoma Unit, University of Sydney

### NSW Cancer Trials Network Support Grant

The Cancer Institute NSW has announced a new grant to support cancer clinical trials within Area Health Services (AHS).

This grant has been established to strengthen the NSW Cancer Trials Network and will provide funding for the AHS to enhance the support services for cancer clinical trials units, the grant will provide funding for the establishment of a Cancer Trials Network office in each of the successful AHS. Only one application will be accepted from each AHS. Successful AHS will receive funding of up to \$200,000 p.a. over three years for the salaries of Director, Cancer Trials Network (up to 0.1 FTE); a Manager, Cancer Trials Network (up to 1 FTE) and an administrative assistant (up to 1 FTE).

Guidelines and application forms for the *NSW Cancer Trials Network Support Grant* will be available from **20 February 2009**.

Please refer to the web site: [http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au/cancer\\_inst/grants/index.html](http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au/cancer_inst/grants/index.html)

### Grants for the establishment of cooperative clinical trial infrastructure

The Cancer Institute NSW will support applications for clinical trials infrastructure that are focused on encouraging and enhancing collaboration and sharing of the infrastructure.

These applications may focus on the establishment and development of collaborations across several national or other cooperative clinical trials groups, utilising shared infrastructure. Applications should focus on collaboration and the sharing of infrastructure across multiple clinical trial groups. Clear governance arrangements for the management of infrastructure must be detailed in the application. Proposed targets for increased quality and quantity of clinical trials and measures of trial participation must also be included in the application. The clinical trials infrastructure supported may include, but not be limited to, biostatistics and other methodological and design resources, data management and clinical trial operations, pharmacology, economics, educational meetings and training programs, and safety, audit and quality assurance programs.

These are a substantial grants that will support non-physical infrastructure. Preference may be given to applications able to identify additional funding support from other institutions. This grant will be valued up to \$1.8M over three years.

Guidelines and application forms for the *Research Infrastructure Grant* will be available from **20 February 2009**.

Please refer to the web site: [http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au/cancer\\_inst/grants/index.html](http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au/cancer_inst/grants/index.html)