



## Open Letter to the UK Cancer Research and Cancer Care Communities

Dear Colleague,

### onCore UK

We are pleased to announce the setting up of onCore UK - a new organisation created to serve as a national cancer biosample and information resource for cancer research. This will enable cancer patients to advance research by donating samples which will contribute to the study of both the treatment and prevention of cancer. onCore UK aims to increase sample availability and accessibility to researchers. Initiated by the National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI), and jointly funded by the Department of Health, Medical Research Council and Cancer Research UK, it will act as an independent, not-for-profit agent and custodian of donated samples.

Samples of human cancers provide a vital link between experimental biology in the laboratory, experimental medicine in the clinic and the development of new interventions against cancer. As a result, our organisations are committed to leading the development of large scale cancer biosample resources to ensure that UK scientists can continue to contribute to the world-class research effort already offered by this country.

It is planned that the new resource will collect samples of tumours and blood donated by patients participating in clinical trials within the National Cancer Research Network's (NCRN) clinical trials networks, building a sample and information resource that will be unparalleled elsewhere in the world.

onCore UK also aims to draw together the many other cancer biosample banks that exist in the UK. It aims to invite these banks to agree to common principles and practices and to form a confederation that can serve the varied needs of the cancer research community. This will be strengthened by the creation of a new purpose built information management system that will act as a web-based portal for researchers seeking samples from the allied resources.

It is expected that onCore UK will commence inviting bids from NCRN clinical trials networks to become biosample acquisition networks early in 2006. Discussions with potential partner cancer biosample banks are now underway. onCore UK will commence other operations around the middle of 2006.

There has never been a better time for research using donated human cancer samples to contribute to the development of new means of tackling cancer:

- Cancer patients broadly support research using donated samples and have participated in the planning and development of this work;
- Changes to the regulation of human biobanking by the research ethics community and the new Human Tissue Authority are expected to result in a framework that facilitates and fosters the work of high quality biobanks, with benefits for research as a consequence;
- Information technology within the NHS, the research community and the biobanking field is maturing rapidly through initiatives such as Connecting for Health, the National Cancer Research Network's Electronic Remote Data Capture project and the National Cancer Research Institute's Informatics Initiative;
- The Department of Health recognises the importance of sample biobanking and the critical role the NHS plays in contributing to the mechanisms for doing so;
- The creation of new common protocols and guidance for good practice in cancer biosample banking will assist compliance with the requirements of the Human Tissue Act 2004 and the Human Tissue Authority whilst contributing to research of the highest quality scientific and ethical standards.

Each of our organisations is proud to be funding onCore UK as a new and unique component of our national cancer research infrastructure. It is planned that onCore UK increase the number of biosamples being collected in a stepwise fashion over the next few years, initially starting small as a pilot in the first 2 years prior to extension of its activities. We expect to see the organisation grow in size and scope beyond the pilot phase to make an increasingly important contribution to the success of our national cancer research efforts.

For further information, please contact Brian Clark, Chief Executive of onCore UK on 020 7269 3132 or by email at [brian.clark@oncoreuk.org](mailto:brian.clark@oncoreuk.org).

Yours sincerely,



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