

News Digest

Learning to share good practice

A JOINT training workshop on Good Clinical Practice (GCP) was co-hosted by NTRAC and Cancer Research UK in May 2005. Chaired by Professor Jim Cassidy, this workshop offered training on the preparation, implementation and management of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to support early phase oncology clinical trials, together with feedback from academic centres about experiences of MHRA inspection.

How to manage trial samples

BUILDING ON successful activity within the QA and nurse communities, NTRAC and Cancer Research UK are co-hosting a workshop on Sample Management within Early Phase Clinical Trials on 12 January 2006 in Manchester. This event aims to bring together laboratory staff, nursing staff and clinical trial monitors/co-ordinators. Register on-line via the NTRAC event diary at: www.ntrac.org.uk

Analysts trained

NTRAC and Cancer Research UK hosted a one-day training course on Good Clinical Laboratory Practice (GCLP) for 42 analysts in March. It followed a successful GCLP training course for senior laboratory staff last year. Dr Richard Sugar, of CR UK, said: "It was a good day and attendees found the course useful."

Sourcing tissues

ANATOMY, ophthalmology, ophthalmic pathology and the biotechnology industry are not obvious routes to a pivotal position in cancer research, but this is the background of Dr Brian Clark who was appointed to the post of chief executive officer of the national cancer tissue resource in January 2005.

The tissue resource, now named onCore UK, is being established as a charitable company that aims to build on the work initiated by NTRAC to create an unprecedented resource of biological samples donated by cancer patients, coupled to information about the donors. It will be used by researchers from both the public and private sectors to develop new approaches to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer patients.

onCore UK sits independently from the research community, although it operates in accordance with the strategic direction of the National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI), and is funded by the Department of Health (DH), the Medical Research Council and Cancer Research UK – initially £5 million over five years (awarded in 2003).

Brian told *NewsTRAC* that one of the reasons why he believes he was chosen for the post was because he is *not* a cancer researcher. "So the only interest I have is in making this organisation work. This allows me to run an organisation that is an honest brokerage, so that I can serve as an independent middle-man between the donor, the healthcare worker and the research community."

Previously, Brian held the post of vice president of Ethics and Pathogenesis at Pharmagene Laboratories Ltd where he was involved in discussions, on behalf of industry researchers, with the DH on the Human Tissue Bill. He was also part of the Bioindustry Growth Team (BIGT).

Eight months into his new job, Brian has finished consulting researchers and is submitting a business plan to the onCore UK board. He hopes to establish collection sites in the first half of 2006 and he expects the collection of samples and data to start shortly thereafter, so that onCore UK can



Brian Clark: 'Here to serve the donors first'

begin to provide a service during the same year.

The needs of patients are at the forefront in all Brian's planning. "I am here to serve the donors first, and to preserve the original intentions of the donor along the sample journey to the research community," he said. "It's their disease, their tissue, it's their treatment and, through taxation or charitable donations, it's their money. The donors are the cornerstone of this organisation."

Brian is proposing to establish a network of sample acquisition sites, likely to be based on National Cancer Research Networks (NCRN) clinical trials networks. Samples, such as peripheral blood and blocks of formalin-fixed paraffin embedded tumour, will be acquired from patients in clinical trials and most tumour types (common and rare) should become available.

Brian has a vision of how he would like onCore UK to be in ten years. "I would like this organisation to be to the research community what the National Blood Service is to transfusion. The absolute default, highly respected, quality organisation that provides an unparalleled service for the users of the samples and the donors of the samples equally."

Cambridge heads successful bid for CancerGrid project

FIVE NTRAC centres (Belfast, Birmingham, Cambridge, Oxford and University College London) have won £2.3 million from the Medical Research Council to establish an electronic, virtual "grid" that will contain and share a variety of information on clinical trials.

The consortium is headed

by Professor Carlos Caldas who leads the Cambridge NTRAC centre, and the award will fund 11 posts for the next three years.

CancerGrid has three main aims: 1) to link existing data from clinical trials and cancer genetic epidemiology with molecular profiling informa-

tion obtained from paraffin-embedded tumour samples; 2) to use CancerGrid to develop collaborative tools to manage clinical trials; 3) to develop a template for e-clinical trials.

The CancerGrid project (www.cancergrid.org) started on May 31, 2005.

● Full story at www.ntrac.org.uk