



onCore UK

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Clinical Leads of NCRN Networks
Clinical Leads of Cancer Service Networks
Chairs of NCRI Clinical Study Groups
Heads of Accredited Cancer Clinical Trials Units

Friday, 30 June 2006

Dear Colleague,

Announcement of the Forthcoming Invitations to Bid to become Biosample Donation Networks

I am writing to announce that onCore UK will soon be inviting bids from cancer research networks to become one of the NCRN's pilot **Biosample Donation Networks** for onCore UK. A complete information pack and application form will be forwarded in the next few weeks. As it is possible that holiday schedules of key individuals in networks or Trusts would complicate consideration of this invitation, we felt it might be helpful to introduce by this letter key aspects of this organisation and our plans. I hope that this is of sufficient interest to encourage you to prepare to bid for your network to become a Biosample Donation Network when the invitations to do so are issued.

What is onCore UK?

onCore UK has been set up as a collaboration of National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) partners and as a sister project to NCRN - funded as a joint initiative of the Department of Health (England), Medical Research Council and Cancer Research UK. onCore UK's mission is to serve as a national biosample and information resource for research towards new interventions against cancer. Further information about this organisation may be found on our website at www.oncoreuk.org.

What does onCore UK plan to do?

Following extensive consultation with the cancer research community, onCore UK plans to support routine collection of biosamples - eventually on a large scale - from patients participating in clinical trials within the NCRN and to make these available, annotated with useful clinical data, for cancer researchers. The biosamples sought will primarily be peripheral blood samples and blocks of formalin fixed paraffin embedded tumour, along with adjacent unaffected tissues where available.

It is planned that onCore UK will start by commissioning sample acquisition services from 4 NCRN cancer research networks during 2006, with these networks commencing sample acquisition by the end of 2006. In subsequent years additional networks may be commissioned. Patients enrolling in all types of clinical trials (observational or interventional) will be eligible to become biosample donors as long as donation is technically feasible and the patients consent to the donation of both the samples and information about themselves, their disease, treatment and outcome.

Most trials in the NCRN portfolio at present do not include routine biosample collection as an integral component of the trial. onCore UK wishes, in particular, to focus its activities on such trials. However, where a trial is open to accrual with sample collection integral to the trial, onCore UK does not seek to compete with the trial group for samples.

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onCore UK: Serving as a national
cancer biospecimen and
information resource
to enable research towards the
discovery and development of new
interventions against cancer

What will the NCRN research networks gain from the work of onCore UK?

Funding will be provided by onCore UK to augment staff resources and allow networks to participate in this service to a sufficient level to meet the nationally applicable operating standards required by onCore UK. In addition, networks that participate in onCore UK's work may gain "credit" for this in their individualised performance plans for NCRN. Further details of the funding available from onCore UK will be made available with the invitations to bid.

Those networks that successfully bid to become biosample donation networks will gain the opportunity to contribute at the leading edge of the cancer research effort. In addition, onCore UK aims to create an exemplary system that is scalable and transferable, in part at least, as a model system for the management of biosample and information resources applicable to the study of other diseases. As a consequence, participating networks may be well placed to extend their biosample related work to other diseases if the opportunity arises (for instance, in the planned UKCRN comprehensive networks).

What will participating NCRN networks be required to do?

Networks bidding to become biosample donation networks will be required to enter into a contract with onCore UK. In brief, the contract will require networks to commit to the following:

- Agree to work to negotiated targets for:
 - seeking consent for donation from cancer patients participating in cancer clinical trials;
 - obtaining and providing blood samples from consenting patients;
 - providing blocks of formalin fixed paraffin embedded tumour and unaffected tissues from consenting patients, where such samples are excess to diagnostic requirements;
 - providing a standardised quality control histopathology report and stained haematoxylin and eosin histological slide for each block of tissue;
 - providing extracts of the patient case records and pathology records relating to consenting patients.
- Working to standard operating procedures provided by onCore UK and related to critical workflows for sample acquisition, stabilisation, temporary storage and dispatch to onCore UK's repository.
- Providing limited laboratory facilities for staff to stabilise and subdivide donated blood samples prior to dispatch to onCore UK's repository.
- Agreeing to employ staff to conduct duties required by the contract using funding provided by onCore UK.

How to bid to become a biosample donation network

An invitation letter and a structured application form will be circulated to all NCRN networks in the coming weeks. Networks will be expected to submit completed applications within around one month of the invitations being issued.

It is planned that applications will be reviewed and decisions made before the end of August 2006.

Successful networks will be expected to have completed contractual arrangements and commenced the supply of samples to onCore UK before the end of December 2006, but preferably prior to then if possible.

I very much look forward to your positive response and look forward to working together. In the mean time, further information will be available from myself or Miss Tracy Parker, Head of Service Development (email: tracy.parker@oncoreuk.org) at the above address. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Brian J Clark
Chief Executive Officer