

## WORKING TOWARDS BEST CANCER CARE

### Premier launches Victoria Cancer Action Plan

Summer 2008

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#### Thank you!

*We thank all those who have given their time and expertise over 2008 to assist with the many improvement projects being undertaken*

As we draw to the end of the year it is good to be able to report that Victoria's Cancer Action Plan 2008-2011 has been released. The overall aim of the Plan is to accelerate the increase in 5 year survival rates by 10 per cent by 2015. So targets have been set and investments made across the four key action areas of prevention, research, treatment and support. These are:

- Reducing major cancer risk factors in the population and maximising effective screening
- Ensuring rapid translation of research into effective treatments and clinical care
- Investing in innovative treatments and technologies and sustainable integrated care systems
- Supporting and empowering patients and their carers throughout their cancer journey

Of particular interest to clinicians and consumers within NEMICS are some of the numeric targets that appear in the plan. These include an increase in the number of newly diagnosed cancer patients with a documented multidisciplinary care treatment plan with the aim of achieving 80% documentation by 2012. In the area of supportive care, there is a target of documented supportive care screening for 50% of newly diagnosed patients by 2012. While these are ambitious targets, there has already been substantial progress in the tumour streams and the health services in the area of multidisciplinary care. In 2009, we will be announcing a funded supportive care strategy to develop screening and referral mechanisms to ensure that those requiring supportive care are identified and linked into appropriate services.

Daniel Andrews, Minister for Health, will be chairing an implementation committee for the Plan, and has indicated a very high level of interest in seeing the outcomes achieved. This is good news for us and good news for all future consumers of cancer care. The Plan can be downloaded from

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/cancer/index.htm>



**Chris Scott, Manager**

### GP Education Sessions

In September, NEMICS collaborated with the Northern and North East Valley Divisions of General Practice to hold a prostate cancer education session for GPs and practice nurses.

The session provided an opportunity for GPs to meet with cancer clinicians and included:

- Evidence based guidelines for the care and management of patients with prostate cancer
- Information on early detection methods, the variety of treatment options & associated side effects, and of the supportive care needs of men with prostate cancer
- Information on local services & resources available to assist in the management of these patients

Twenty-four local GPs and practice nurses attended this session to hear presentations from a multidisciplinary team that included a Urologist, Medical Oncologist, Radiation Oncologist, Urology Nurse Consultant and a consumer; associated with both Austin and Northern Health.

90% of participants indicated that the content was entirely relevant to their learning needs and would recommend this activity to colleagues.

NEMICS is now planning a similar session with Eastern Health and the Eastern Region GP Divisions, in early 2009.



## Professional Development Grants

In September we conducted a survey of health professionals and consumers in the NEMICS region about their views on their PD and education needs and priorities. We had 87 respondents with the majority being from allied health (38%) and nursing (48%) backgrounds.

Here is what you had to say:

Top three educational priorities:

1. communications skills (70%)
2. clinical skills training (69%)
3. conference attendance (66%)

Top three activities that attract least amount of organisational and financial support:

1. consumer advocacy training
2. postgraduate study in oncology
3. leadership development & clinical skills training

We have used this information to review 2008/09 PD and Education grant program.

Watch this space for announcement of recipients of Round 1 grants in 2008.

Information about Round 2 grants will be circulated to staff at all public and private hospitals in the region and community and primary care.



### Your PD experiences .....



This year I commenced a Graduate Diploma in Cancer Nursing at La Trobe University. As part of this, I have done a research assignment on symptom management issues in palliative care, in particular, the use of permanent tunnelled catheters for the management of malignant pleural effusions and malignant ascites. This research is being used to assemble learning packages for staff education on the wards to improve patient care

**Mary John, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Northern Health**



In May I attended the DAA conference on the Gold Coast to learn more about nutrition management of radiotherapy and oncology patients suffering from malnutrition. I am now working with Day Oncology staff to develop protocols for the nutrition management of Northern Health's Day Oncology patients. In the future, I hope to build relationships with Austin and Eastern Health dietitians and to develop standardised assessment across the three health services.

**Kate Freeman, Dietitian, Northern Health**



I completed the course "Nursing People with Lung Cancer" at La Trobe University. This provided me with the opportunity to expand my knowledge of all aspects of cancer care. This has improved the quality of the care I give to my patients and is also a valuable resource to my colleagues and students. I am also using this knowledge on the Austin Health 'Cancer Information Committee', which aims to optimise patient education and best practice.

**Nectaria Matsamakias, Oncology Nurse, Austin Health**



I attended COSA's 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting in Adelaide in November 2007 and presented a poster on behalf of the colorectal tumour group: *Mapping Colorectal Information across NEMICS*. The project mapped written information given to colorectal patients and identified gaps in information provision; evaluated the quality of the information; recommended sources of consistent, quality information, and; recommend strategies to improve service delivery of patient information.

**Lesley Turner, Oncology Nurse Unit Manager, Eastern Health**



I attended the Strategic Thinking Enhancing Program for Specialists (STEPS) program held in Queensland from 11th to 13th April 2008. The goal of the program is to re-engage the medical profession in the business of leadership of healthcare. Some of the more important lessons for me were the need to involve clinicians in high level leadership; and the importance of introducing systematic processes to reduce waste. I continue to work on the themes introduced in the course, and further develop the workings of the tumour group to achieve results.

**Jacquie Chirgwin, Medical Oncologist, Eastern Health**

## Your PD experiences ....



With my Professional Development Grant, I commenced the final subject of my Masters in Medical Radiations called *Current Issues in Medical Radiations*. Topics included recruitment and retention of staff, and the electronic age and its effect on informed consent and radiation staff workloads. It was quite productive to be able to discuss with staff from other departments how they are addressing these issues. I will now be able to share this information with my colleagues.

**Margaret Benci, Radiation Oncology Centre, Austin Health**



I completed a Palliative Care Resource Nurse course at Banksia Palliative Care. It was an extremely rewarding experience and gave me the knowledge to set about changing the way we deliver palliative care in my workplace. We now have a range of new resources such as: a pain management committee; regular staff in-service; patient assessment tools; and, a palliative care nurse, which have greatly improved the care we provide to our palliative patients.

**Debra Harper, CNS Oncology Mentor, Angliss Hospital**



During the past 12 months I have been involved in a collaborative project to develop principles for nursing practice in the management of Seroma after breast cancer surgery. The NEMICS Professional Development Grant enabled me to attend the CNSA Winter Congress and present our findings. Our research highlighted the need for a unified approach to nursing competency and practice. We envisage that our research will become a guiding resource for all nurses.

**Kathy Wallace, Specialist Breast Care Nurse, Northern Health**



I attended the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology (ASTRO) Annual Meeting in September 2008 in Boston, USA and presented my research into the accuracy of our radiotherapy treatment to the breast. It was an exciting opportunity to present the work being done here at the Austin on an international stage. I was also able to learn about the latest technology and skill developments.

**Nigel Anderson, Radiation Therapist, Austin Health**



I attended the 50<sup>th</sup> ASTRO Annual Meeting held in September in Boston, USA and presented a poster on the preliminary results of the Austin Radiation Oncology Center's 'Prostate Gold Seed' clinical trial. It was also an opportunity to meet with other radiation oncology professionals from around the world and learn more about current and future trends, particularly in prostate cancer research. This experience has aided the advancement of clinical practice in prostate radiation therapy at Austin Health.

**Angelina Mercuri, Radiation Therapist, Austin Health**



My NEMICS PD grant assisted in funding my post graduate course in Palliative Care which has given me a totally different perspective of palliative care in an acute ward. I have gained skills such as symptom management and also learnt of the importance of involving the carer wherever possible. This new knowledge is of great benefit to my colleagues and patients.

**Veronica Knowles, RN and Unit Manager, Angliss Hospital**



I visited four centres of excellence in the Asia Pacific Region to observe their Speech Pathology Units. Some of the more significant outcomes from the trip include: the commencement of a weekly Dietetics/ Speech Pathology clinic in the Radiation Oncology Centre; the creation of a Speech Pathology project to minimise risk within the Laryngectomy population, and; discussion about a possible clinical support network for Speech Pathologists in Singapore and Brisbane.

**Sarah Deck, Speech Pathologist, Austin Health**

## New employee at Eastern Health

### Staff Profile



**Yolanda Ebanks**  
**Administrative support to**  
**Multidisciplinary meetings – Eastern Health**

Yolanda provides efficient support to multidisciplinary case conference meetings and other cancer service activities within Eastern Health  
 T: 9895 4037

E: Yolanda.ebanks@easternhealth.org.au

## Communication skills workshop for NEMICS Clinicians

In collaboration with The Cancer Council Victoria (TCCV) and staff from the Mercy Hospital for Women, NEMICS ran two modules from the Victorian Communication for Cancer Care Clinician program:

- Discussing Sexuality
- Eliciting and Responding to Emotional Cues

Health professionals who attended the sessions included occupational therapy, social work, physiotherapy, dietetics, and nursing and represented the Austin, Box Hill and Northern hospitals, Broadmeadows Health Service, Peter James Centre & Alphington Community Care.

A big thank you to Gen Lishenko and Laura Burchill from MHW, and Sue Hegarty and Kate Wakefield from TCCV, for sharing their expertise and knowledge.

NEMICS will be conducting further communication skills sessions in 2009.



## Cancer Australia Psychosocial Web site Learning Module

Nursing and Allied Health clinicians from NEMICS – Northern Health and Hume RICS- Kilmore Health recently piloted the Psychosocial Learning Module on the Cancer Australia Learning web site. Project staff from CanNET Victoria and the Office of Post Graduate Medical Education (OPME) at Sydney University were on hand to guide the clinicians through the new education package.

The clinicians were enthusiastic about the potential of the site as a valuable learning resource. The learning objectives for the module were outlined and addressed the importance of providing appropriate patient-centered support, not only for cancer patients but also their family and carers. The module itself was reported to be very informative, well structured, and easy to access and navigate. Participants felt that the content would be suitable for new staff and for all disciplines that have some or limited training in psychosocial issues.

The participants were guided through a psychosocial scenario and assisted with problem solving the issues. The psychosocial tutorial offered practical approaches to address various emotional and psychological responses to a cancer diagnosis and how to manage anger, distress and depression.

You can see the range of learning modules available by visiting the website, [www.cancerlearning.gov.au](http://www.cancerlearning.gov.au) It also provides links to oncology related resources such as community services, research and information. Furthermore, OPME and EdCan are planning to deliver a follow up Lung Cancer case study workshop in March 2009.

### Upcoming Events:

- Combined Tumour Groups  
23 Feb
- Combined Tumour Groups  
25 Feb
- NEMICS Annual Forum  
16 June

### Professional Development and Education Program

*Round 2 of PD & Education Grants  
will be launched in March 2009*

*Future projections relating to cancer services and the cancer work force, indicate that demand for services will soon exceed the supply of trained health professionals. In this context, further developing the skills of existing health professionals is essential.*

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# Seasons Greetings

**from the Directorate and staff at NEMICS**

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