

WORKING TOWARDS BEST CANCER CARE

Introducing the new chair of Reference Group

Summer 2009

Inside This Issue

- 1 Chair Reference Group
- 2 Governance review
- 2 Supportive Care
- 3 Consumer Corner
- 4 BreaCan forum
- 4 CanNET sustainability
- 5 PD grant
- 5 Breaking news
- 5 Staff update
- 6 Upcoming events

Associate Professor Joe McKendrick

**Director, Medical Oncology,
Eastern Health**

After a hard fought election campaign, I was eventually elected by a slim majority from a worthy group of fellow applicants to this prestigious position.

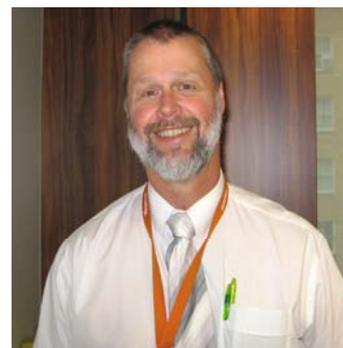
In all seriousness it is an exciting time to be involved with the administration and improvement of cancer services and I am very pleased to have been offered this opportunity.

I am currently spending most Friday afternoons in the NEMICS directorate offices in Heidelberg and coming to appreciate the endeavour, indeed fervour, shown by the directorate for issues affecting our cancer patients.

The integrated cancer service (ICS), and I think in particular NEMICS, are coming of age and enjoying greater acceptance amongst oncology clinicians, the cancer research community and of course our cancer services consumer constituency.

There are a growing number of opportunities, facilitated by the ICS structure, to develop programs to enhance our routine clinical practice and in particular bring about a meeting of the minds in cancer treatment delivery. In addition I see the ICS as vital in the campaign to enhance cancer research and in particular clinical research, so vital for the ongoing improvement in cancer outcomes.

It is no longer enough to have generic cancer experts in our clinical practice, the burgeoning knowledge of cancer processes and the almost parallel therapeutic development has sounded the death knell for the "Jack of all trades" oncology specialist.



Sub specialisation in cancer care results in greater expertise within cancer centres and thus outcomes, but may reduce availability of specific expertise in some areas.

However, I am mindful that we also have to consider our colleagues who practise in rural areas, who may not have the option to specialise, but who have developed links and referral pathways to specialist centres for specific cancer types.

I see this conundrum as a key opportunity for the tumour groups to examine how cancer care is delivered within each tumour stream across NEMICS. It is their role to guide the development of optimal management of patients by looking at what is currently done and what could be improved. Together, they are in a good position to influence health service and government policy in providing authoritative opinion and recommendations for the future of our cancer work force and treatment facilities.

There is a wealth of opportunity for improvements in our application of cancer care and this is being greatly facilitated by the ICS structures, I am confident the reference group will be at the forefront of analysis and change to improve cancer patient outcomes, cancer facilities and work satisfaction.



Governance Review

We have been around for almost five years, and the Governance Committee has decided that the time is right to review the structures we set up to establish NEMICS. Some changes may be needed now that we are a more 'mature' organisation. Dr Heather Wellington and her colleague Dr Paul Woodhouse from DLA Phillips Fox, have

recently been appointed to conduct the review of NEMICS governance arrangements, and we hope to report back some of their findings in our next edition. For more information please contact Chris Scott, NEMICS Manager.

VICS Supportive Care Conference

NEMICS was a proud partner in the inaugural and highly successful Supportive Care Conference held on 19 October. The theme was *Integrated Supportive Care: a Team Approach*.

The conference included poster presentations and keynote speakers such as Prof. Sanchia Aranda of the University of Melbourne and Prof. Phyllis Butow of the University of Sydney, as well as a wide range of specialists and researchers from the cancer field.

The topics included research on supportive care screening, results of various quality improvement projects, supportive care needs and management of

these needs both from consumer and health care professional perspectives.

The conference attracted 300 health care professionals and consumers from metropolitan, rural and regional Victoria.



Supportive Care Grants Program

NEMICS has provided grants to its health services to implement models of routine supportive care screening for cancer patients. To date project officers have been appointed at three health services, they are:



Clare Poker—Project Officer, Supportive Care Screening, Northern Health

Clare has a background in clinical health management and nursing education. She has been working at the Northern Health since 2000 in various management and project officer positions. Prior to her current project officer role, Clare was the Nursing Service Manager at Craigieburn Health Service - one of the "Super Clinics". Craigieburn Health Service have a day oncology service, operating since 2008. Clare is looking forward to utilising her experiences in change management, education and clinical practice to embed supportive care at Northern Health.



Kelly Mills—Project Officer, Supportive Care Screening, Austin Health

Kelly has been employed as a dietitian at Austin Health for the past seven years, working across a range of clinical areas over this time. More specifically to cancer services, Kelly has experience working on the Oncology / Haematology wards as well as in day oncology. She has been involved in a number of projects within Austin Health, and looks forward to working with staff and patients to successfully implement supportive care screening within Cancer Services.



Delwyn Morgan – Project Officer, Supportive Care Screening, Eastern Health

Delwyn has been working at Box Hill for the past 12 years in various roles. She is an experienced oncology nurse and also has background in oncology nursing education at Box Hill Hospital. The Eastern Health project encompasses various oncology units at Box Hill, Maroondah, Yarra Ranges and Wantirna.

Consumer Corner

Consumer Recruitment Update

Over this year we have been working hard at getting more people on board who have experienced cancer services directly or via the care of a close friend or relative. Our aim has been to get input from more people who have experienced the system, to guide and help us in improving the system.

We have undertaken a variety of approaches in seeking out additional interested persons. To date we are very pleased to report that we have met with 13 people who have agreed to be involved by contributing to projects, and being on committees and cancer stream groups.

As an official welcome to our 'new recruits' and also to thank our existing, hard working consumers, a morning tea and information session is being held on **Wednesday 9 December**. If you haven't already done so, please confirm your attendance with Melissa on 9496 3831 by Friday 4 December.

Group presentations

Five presentations have been given to cancer support groups and social/volunteer community groups. Groups included prostate, breast, and haematology, as well as a Chinese cancer support group and a Red Cross group. Efforts were made to cover a variety of groups across the NEMICS region.

Public advertisements

Advertisements were placed in community newspapers, including the Fifty Plus News and three Leader newspapers within the NEMICS region.

The Prospect study

The PROSPECT Program aims to develop a state-wide system for monitoring the experiences of Victorian cancer patients. This will be done through regular surveys of cancer patients recruited through the Victorian Cancer Registry. As this is a new initiative, a pilot to test the acceptability of the survey and recruitment process was conducted. NEMICS participated in this pilot of the CanNET Victoria program.

The newly developed survey tool assesses cancer patients' experiences throughout their cancer care. The pilot provided a snapshot view of the experiences of cancer patients across NEMICS and Hume RICS.

Participants were asked to report on their experiences of cancer care at each critical phase in their illness:

Building closer links with health services and their consumers

Meetings are being held with health service consumer participation officers and community advisory committees to encourage greater awareness of the cancer reform agenda, the local clinical network and its activities. We hope that in this way we can share resources and work more closely together to improve care for people affected by cancer in our region. Our next presentation will be to the Northern Health Community Advisory Committee on **Monday 14 December 2009**.

Consumer Forum

The Cancer and Palliative Care unit of the Department of Health provided NEMICS with funding to promote consumer education and training. NEMICS used these funds to sponsor four consumers to attend The Clinical Oncological Society of Australia (COSA) Annual Scientific Meeting consumer forum, *It's not just about the cancer*. The consumers who attended the forum were: Mrs Dorothy King, Mr Leo Crimmins, Mrs Fay Fraser and Mrs Sophy Athan.

Upcoming Training - 2010

We are currently in planning to host a two-day workshop in February on being an effective member on committees and other consumer engagement initiatives. We will be encouraging anyone interested to attend. If you have ideas on what you'd like to see included in this session, please feel free to contact Anna on 9496 3261 or via email at anna.mascitti@austin.org.au.

being told about their cancer diagnosis, planning for treatment/management, preparing for surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy, having treatment, finishing cancer treatment, continuity of care and care co-ordination.

This phase of the PROSPECT study revealed a high level of satisfaction with care received. However it also highlighted areas where significant improvements can be made. These related particularly to the provision of information prior to the commencement of treatment, information given about follow-up at completion of treatment and information sent to GPs.

Recipes for Living—BreaCan Forum



A forum for women living with breast or gynaecological cancer was recently held at Craigieburn Health Service on Saturday 12 September 2009. 17 women and two support people attended. This forum was conducted as part of a collaborative project between BreaCan and NEMICS to provide much needed supportive care to women with gynaecological cancers in the north east of Melbourne.

The forum provided an opportunity for women to connect with each other, to learn more about living well following a cancer diagnosis and treatment, and to find out about support services. The women were also able to participate in a creative and relaxing activity.

Liz Crocker, clinical psychologist, discussed practical ways of living well with cancer in an interactive and relaxed setting, suggesting many ways for women to take care of their mental well being.

Eileen Douglas, Northern Health social worker, outlined local services available to women with cancer and encouraged the women to share their knowledge of support services they have utilised themselves.

The afternoon session provided the women with an opportunity to participate in art therapy or the "Caring for You" workshop.

Feedback was very positive and the women were most appreciative and found the day worthwhile. Of the feedback received, all felt that their expectations of the day were met. They enjoyed sharing their experiences with other women, which was highlighted by the great atmosphere and good spirit of the day.

Feedback received from the women included:

'I thought it was helpful for me to meet and talk to women in the same situation'

'The information given was very helpful and encouraging, the company was great, the variety energising; in all a great day.'

BreaCan is an information and support service for people affected by a gynaecological cancer or breast cancer, their families and friends.



Attendees enjoying the art therapy session

CanNET—Sustainability Phase

Following the success of the CanNET program in Victoria, a sustainability plan is underway with the current program extended until June 2010. The focus is on multidisciplinary (MD) care and referral pathways. Work is progressing to further facilitate the use of online meeting technologies in conjunction with videoconferencing to support MD meeting linkages between individual clinicians and MD teams. This includes extending the use of WebEx to link regional clinicians to lung cancer MD meetings at the Royal Melbourne and Box Hill hospitals. It is anticipated that this will lead to an increase in the number of regional/ rural patients with lung cancer, having their case discussed in a MDM with appropriate specialist representation.

A major focus in this phase is to build local capacity, in particular the transfer of skills to local MD meeting

administration staff, to independently run online and videoconference meetings in the future. Staff at NEMICS and Hume RICS are encouraging and promoting the use of online meeting technology for a range of purposes including professional development and routine meetings where people would normally have to travel.

Two referral pathways which were developed during the CanNET program will be piloted across six sites in NEMICS and Hume RICS in this phase. Oncology nurses from Kilmore & District Hospital and Northern Health will pilot the supportive care pathway for the Mitchell and Murrindindi shires. The information pathway for lung cancer will be piloted in these sites and other units across Hume RICS. It is envisaged that these pathways will be tested in the context of implementing supportive care screening.

Professional Development Grants

Professional development (PD) grants are offered to clinicians as part of NEMICS commitment to the continuing development of the cancer workforce. Here are some of this year's recipients.

Helen Corbett, Health Promotion Coordinator, Northern Health

Stage a performance of the play "Four footprints"

The play *Four footprints* was undertaken to assist in creating a better understanding of cancer and palliative care, particularly the role of supportive care in the treatment of terminal conditions. 86 people from a wide range of organisations in the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne attended the performance and forum with positive feedback.

Joe Chang, Radiation Oncology Registrar, Austin Health
The PET/CT for Radiation Oncology course at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Centre

The course provided Joe a much deeper understanding of the role of PET/CT in Radiation Oncology and more importantly, linking with other people in the field. Joe's attendance at this course has already had a direct impact on improving the research and clinical services at the Austin Hospital

Katherine Fraser & Anne Pagram, Physiotherapists, Eastern Health

Developed a professional development program

The program aimed at knowledge and skills development for allied health staff focusing on oncology theory and supportive care specifically. Participant feedback from the program was very positive. The course will now be rolled out to all allied health staff in Eastern Health on an annual basis.

Andrew Wirth, Radiation Oncologist, Eastern Health
World Lung Cancer Conference in San Francisco

The conference provided some excellent reviews on key areas in lung oncology, and in particular targeted therapy, new TNM staging system, new technology in radiotherapy and the latest views on combined chemo-radiotherapy for locally advanced disease. The update on developments in systemic/target therapy will be of great value in recognising patient subsets suitable for specific therapies and coordinating local regional and systemic therapy in patients with lung cancer.

Genevieve Cahir, Stoma Therapy Nurse, Northern Health

Australian Association of Stoma Therapy Nurse Inc Conference

The sharing of information to empower patients and all health professionals was a common theme of the conference. The conference has provided Genevieve with an opportunity to update her knowledge.

Talya McDonald, Dietitian, Northern Health
National Dietitians' Association of Australia Conference in Darwin

Talya did a poster presentation at the conference. The conference provided an opportunity to update her knowledge in oncology and malnutrition management. Talya is working towards implementing a nutritional screening tool to increase the referral rates of oncology patients who are at nutrition risk at the Northern Hospital.



Breaking News

Kirstie Marshall, MP, member for Forest Hill, hosted a community health forum on Thursday 5 November. The Hon. Daniel

Andrews, Minister for Health was guest speaker and outlined Victoria's Cancer Action Plan with particular reference to the four action areas; prevention,

research, treatment and support.

The Minister explained the Integrated Cancer Service model and recommended the NEMICS Supportive Care Directory to those attending.

Members of the community were given the opportunity to ask questions of the Minister, a number of which concerned cancer service delivery.



Jan Townsend, NEMICS Administrative Assistant has decided to start a new life in retirement. We thank Jan for her outstanding contribution to NEMICS and wish her well on the golf course and in caring for her growing number of grandchildren.

Upcoming Events:

- **Integrated Cancer Centres Symposium:** 9 & 10 December @ Hilton on the Park.
- **PICS Annual Forum:** 25 February 2010 @ Ella Lathan Theatre RCH
- **Network to Network 2010, the inaugural Australasian Clinical Networks Conference:** 17-19 March 2010 @ MCG, hosted by DoH.
- **10th Behavioural Research in Cancer Control (BRCC) Conference:** 3-day program from 14-16 April 2010 in Perth, WA