

NEMICS Annual Planning Workshop



Dr Cathy Balding

The experience for everyone touched by cancer is changing over time. Patients and clinicians are faced with more treatment options; supportive care and survivorship issues are being addressed in the health services and in the community; there is growing demand on service capacity and the expectation that care will be made available in a more efficient, effective and timely

way. To meet the goals of the VCAP, a population focussed approach to cancer services is being developed. At the annual planning day in February, many of these issues were on the table.

The 2012 NEMICS planning day was aimed at reaching agreement on the fundamentals of region-wide service planning. Members of the governance committee, clinical reference group and consumer reference group came together to talk about the planning priorities at each NEMICS health service, to identify some of the difficulties inherent in service planning beyond the individual health services, and to agree on some first steps on this journey. The half day event was facilitated by Dr Cathy Balding.

The clinical reference group have since discussed the suggested priority areas and presented the recommendations to the governance committee for endorsement. The recommendations will form a part of the NEMICS work plan for 2012.

Some benefits of region-wide service planning

- services in locations and volumes that best meet the patient's needs
- services as close as possible to the patient
- right expertise
- trust among service providers
- sharing of resources
- sharing and disseminating research
- sharing models of care
- aiming for a standard of care and standardisation across services
- population focused approach
- having knowledge of what happens outside NEMICS – being aware of state-wide issues and projects



*Shane White
Northern Health*



*Jason Payne
Austin Health*

NEMICS Group Professional Development Grants

NEMICS is pleased to announce the release of Group Professional Development (PD) grants for 2012.

Applications are invited from groups of health professionals that:

- Demonstrate commitment to improving the delivery of cancer care
- Link their PD needs to providing better service to people with cancer

By offering these grants NEMICS acknowledges that PD extends beyond the needs of the individual worker. This is an opportunity for teams, or groups of health professionals specifically formed for this purpose, to think creatively about their PD needs in the context of organisational priorities for improvement. The total funding available is \$45,000.

Applications close Monday 30th April 2012.

To download the guidelines and application form visit www.nemics.org.au

Moving Forward with Confidence project: *Increasing the capacity for self-management in cancer survivors*

Since receiving a Department of Health grant to support the Moving Forward with Confidence project, Paula Howell has commenced as project officer (see staff news), and significant progress has been made.

The project aims to provide cancer survivors with knowledge and support so that they can more independently and confidently manage their health following treatment, and improve their sense of wellbeing in the setting of their cancer history.

It also aims to make health professionals more aware of the particular issues for cancer survivors and to increase the skills and expertise of cancer professionals in promoting self-management at the end of active treatment.

The project includes patient groups in three of the NEMICS health services: Austin Health Breast and Haematology, Northern Health Colorectal and Eastern Health Ambulatory Oncology Rehabilitation Program.

Starting in April of this year, it is hoped that systems will be put in place so that each patient will receive a Health and Wellbeing Plan, which will include a summary of their medical treatment, follow-up appointments and individualised self-management goals that focus with the patient on what is most important to them.

Each of the patients will be contacted by the Cancer Council Victoria Help Line. Help Line staff trained in self-management techniques will phone participants at 4 weeks, 4 months and 8 months following completion of the Health and Wellbeing Plan.

There is active and ongoing consumer involvement in this project including in the grant development and participation in a workshop that looked at the components of the Health and Wellbeing Plan. NEMICS consumers will work with the project team and provide feedback and representation on the project Steering Committee.



Patsy Yates

Professor Patsy Yates from Queensland University of Technology (QUT) ran a one day workshop for health professionals on 29 February focussing on self-management and goal setting techniques, and providing participants with the opportunity to learn and practice motivational interviewing techniques.

Please contact Paula Howell, NEMICS Moving Forward with Confidence Project Officer if you would like any further information regarding this project.
Tel: 9496 3886 or email: paula.howell@austin.org.au.



Joe McKendrick

NEMICS Clinical Reference Group

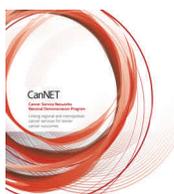
Associate Professor Joe McKendrick has stepped down from his role as Chair of the NEMICS Clinical Reference Group. For more than two years Joe has provided support and advice on many of the Directorate projects and his work has been greatly appreciated. He remains a member of the Clinical Reference Group. NEMICS thanks Joe for all his hard work and time he committed to the role.

Deputy Chair, Dr Shane White, has been appointed the new Chair.



Shane White

CanNET Victoria News



CanNET Victoria is working with the Department of Health, NEMICS and the VICS MDM group to review and update the *Multidisciplinary team meeting toolkit*, first published by the Department in 2006.

The original toolkit was developed to assist ICS and MDTs in the early development of meetings across the state. Since then, there have been many advances in the level of development and complexity of multidisciplinary meetings, including the introduction of electronic administrative systems.

Other current issues facing many ICS and individual multidisciplinary teams include how to build capacity in the face of increasing numbers of cancer patients and sustain administrative support to meetings.

Additionally many meetings now link with other sites and individual clinicians remote from the host site, which adds significantly to the complexity of conducting meetings.

The purpose of the review is to collate tools being used across the state with the view to adding appropriate items, updating definitions and principles described in the toolkit and to include new tools that will assist future development of meetings.

A workshop to discuss and recommend new tools and resources that are required was held on 28 March. The revised toolkit will be distributed broadly for comments prior to being submitted to the Department in June 2012.

Lymphoedema Service Mentoring Program

There has been a shortage of lymphoedema therapists in the north east Melbourne metropolitan region in recent years. As new therapists commence work they often lack the support needed to sustain practice. A NEMICS professional development grant enabled an innovative mentoring program to be conducted for these therapists during 2011.

The program matched ten recently trained lymphoedema therapists from the NEMICS region with ten experienced therapists from outside the region. Clinicians taking part came from allied health: physiotherapy, occupational therapy, nursing and myotherapy. All mentors had a minimum of five years experience in the field.

The program included a training session with a psychologist. Each pair committed to meet together on 6-8 occasions using face-to-face meetings, phone calls or email. The project officers contacted the participants twice during the program and a closing session was held in November 2011.

All involved reported strong satisfaction with the training and resource materials: Seventy-one percent of the NEMICS based clinicians agreed that the mentoring program had improved their knowledge and confidence; a large majority reported that the mentoring program improved the likelihood that they would remain working in the field of lymphoedema; most agreed that the program been successful; many hoped the program could be offered again in the future.

Written by Judy Purbrick
Senior Physiotherapist
Mercy Health Lymphoedema Clinic



Pictured above are some of the lymphoedema therapists with their mentors

Box Hill Oncology Unit – Psychology Service



Box Hill Hospital is pleased to welcome Heather Christensen-Anderson, Psychologist to the oncology unit. This is a new service for the Box Hill Oncology Unit.

Heather will be providing psychology services for cancer patients and their families. Located at Box Hill one day per week, she is accepting referrals for anxiety, distress, depression, body image and adjustment issues and grief.

Heather also works at Wantirna Health in the palliative care unit and the ambulatory oncology rehabilitation program, as well as running a private practice. She has a background in health and counselling psychology with almost 20 years experience. Heather has had previous psycho-oncology experience working at Breast Screen Victoria at St Vincent's for 18 years.

Heather looks forward to meeting and working with the patients and staff of the Box Hill Oncology Unit.

NEMICS and the Victorian and Tasmanian Youth Cancer Network Project

NEMICS participation in the VTYCN project was completed in January. This project was a part of a broader national initiative to improve the delivery and coordination of services, support and care for adolescents and young adults (AYA) with cancer.

An important outcome of the project was in building and supporting network for clinician with an interest in AYA patients. Some key people from across the region were identified and brought together to provide feedback and advice for improving services. Education sessions were held and links were strengthened between providers in NEMICS health services and oNTrac@PeterMac.

For the first time a comprehensive report on the numbers of AYA patients, the types of cancers involved and the service and referral pathways, including service gaps, was completed for all NEMICS health services. As the number of AYA patients treated in NEMICS health services is small, a comprehensive retrospective audit was carried out in order to fully understand the experience of the AYA patients.

Adolescent and young adult cancer patients are recognised as a group with specific needs: the psychological impact of undergoing cancer treatment, interruption to educational progress, social isolation from peers and the need to preserve the opportunity for parenthood are some of the issues that can arise from a cancer diagnosis.

As phase 2 of the Supportive Care projects gets underway, a focus will be placed on developing a strategy to respond to the particular needs of AYA patients in our health services.

Beyond NEMICS, the work conducted has contributed to an improved understanding of the significant impact and role health services have in relation to the care of AYAs with cancer. It has also highlighted the need for ongoing partnerships and state wide support.

Where to from here?

The recommendations from NEMICS and the other participating ICS are currently being reviewed by the central VTYCN project team and oNTrac@PeterMac. This will form the final report which will shape the state wide model of care for AYA due for completion in June 2012.

There has been significant activity nationally. The development of the AYA web portal, known as **www.youthcancer.com.au** will be launched in April/May 2012 and will provide AYA patients and health professionals with information on AYA cancer types, youth cancer services and include a support services directory.

Youth Cancer Network and oNTrac@PeterMac will be conducting an AYA Oncology seminar on Monday 4th June at Hilton on the Park. [Click here](#) for further details.

Staff Updates



Paula Howell

The NEMICS directorate team welcomes **Paula Howell**, project officer for the survivorship project. Paula is an OT by background and brings experience of the public health system in both the acute and community health sectors. This project will be completed in September 2013.

Many of you will know **Emma Sayers**, who worked hard on the successful NEMICS survivorship project application and who has subsequently been working in the wellness team at Austin Health. Emma has additionally taken on the 0.4EFT role as Austin Health Service Improvement Facilitator with a focus on supportive care and survivorship. In this role she will complement the work of Nadia Ayres.

Anna Mascitti completed the NEMICS AYA project in January and has now been appointed to further our work in the care coordination area. She will work closely with Natasha Krajcar.

Sandi May finished up with the CanNET project in January to prepare for the arrival of her first child with husband Dean. Alex, a healthy baby boy, was welcomed into the world on 9 February, weighing 6 pounds 11 oz. We wish them well in their exciting new adventure.



Emma Sayers



Victorian Cancer Patient Experience Survey

The Department of Health is working with the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer (CBRC) to develop a consumer experience survey to help evaluate priorities contained within the Victoria's Cancer Action Plan (VCAP). This work involved looking at existing surveys that measure cancer patients' experiences of care and consulting with health professionals and consumers about content for a Victorian patient experience survey.

Extensive consultations involved consumers and health professionals participating in a series of focus groups or telephone interviews. These groups had similar views on what was significant in any episode of care, and therefore what questions should be asked.

Key areas were:

- access to services
- access to treatment services
- co-ordination of care
- scheduling appointments
- access to allied health professionals
- waiting periods are not too long
- communication
- waiting times
- consumer participation in treatment decisions
- parking

Both consumers and health professionals recommended combining items from two existing surveys into a new survey and including additional questions that addressed these key areas of care.

As a result of these consultations, a new survey tool has been developed and is in the process of refinement. Work needs to be done to ensure that the survey is easily understood, that response options are appropriate and that the results produced by the survey are reliable and valid.

A pilot study will be done to develop a process for identifying and contacting patients for the survey, response rates for the study and the validity and reliability of the survey.

As a key goal of the study is to provide data to health services regarding their patients treatment experiences, identifying the most effective and appropriate means of feeding back the results of the survey to health services is important. As part of the pilot study, CBRC will work with health professionals to develop a template for reporting the study's findings and will test the usefulness of this template with health professionals.

*Written by Vicki White
Deputy Director, CBRC*



Community Ambassador Project

A cancer experience is never easy but knowing what is available to help while on that journey, can make things easier.

NEMICS is aiming to inform the general public of locally available services, supports and resources that they or their friends and families may wish to use during their cancer experience.

We are currently seeking interested individuals to present this valuable information to local community and cancer support groups. Training will be provided to support you in this role. This is a volunteer position, however expenses will be reimbursed.

If you have confidence and/or experience in public speaking and a willingness to meet with different groups then we would love to hear from you. Please send a short expression of interest detailing relevant experience to Melissa Shand by Friday 13 April 2012.

Email: melissa.shand@austin.org, or
Mail: NEMICS, C/- Austin Hospital, P.O. Box 5555, Heidelberg Vic 3084.

If you would like any further information, please contact Melissa Shand on 9496 3322 or via email.

Malnutrition in Victorian Cancer Services

The Department of Health has identified malnutrition as an important supportive care need for people with cancer and have provided funding for a study in Victoria. People with cancer are at an increased risk of malnutrition, which can affect how they tolerate and recover from their treatment.

Dietitians from fifteen Victorian health services are participating in the project which will identify malnutrition and how it is managed within health services. The project aims to identify areas of improvement to assist in reducing malnutrition and the burden on patients.

The NEMICS health services participating in this project are Eastern Health and Austin Health. The prevalence survey will occur this month, targeting adults who are attending day oncology, radiotherapy or who are inpatients.

For further information contact:
Kathryn Marshall
Dietitian Project Manager
Kathryn.Marshall@petermac.org

