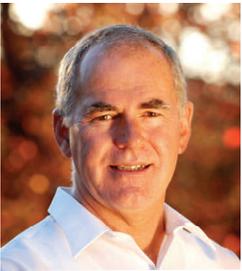


NEMICS 2012 Annual Forum a Big Success



The 2012 NEMICS Annual Forum attracted a record number of attendees. This was undoubtedly due to the skills and reputation of the keynote speaker – Professor Stewart Dunn.

This year's theme was 'patient-centred communication from cancer treatment to survivorship'. The

importance of skillful communication in delivering excellent patient care has been talked about frequently in recent years. The supportive care screening implementation projects in each of the NEMICS health services highlighted the therapeutic conversation that should follow the completion of a distress screen.

Stewart Dunn broke the mould in presenting his key note address. Insights and reflections prompted by his address no doubt continued for days in the workplaces of those in the room. The raised level of engagement and interest, started conversations about communication styles across the region because of Stewart's dynamic presentation.

NEMICS directorate staff would like to thank everyone who attended and participated in the evening.

Listening to Patients' Supportive Care Needs

Supportive care needs for patients one to two years after their diagnosis

Penny Sanderson, Manager of the Mercy Health Lymphoedema Service spoke to the NEMICS Annual Forum about her experience with providing supportive care screening to patients attending the clinic. Penny was joined on stage by Anne Devenish, a consumer who shared her personal response to the experience of completing supportive care screening.

Patients who attend the lymphoedema clinic have had their diagnosis between one and two years at the time of screening. Penny told us that 61% of the patients reported distress levels of 4 or above – the usual signal that a referral to a supportive care provider may be needed.

Penny referred to the literature that breast cancer survivors with lymphoedema often reported higher distress and more symptoms than those without lymphoedema. Although the distress levels are not always predictive of the need for intervention and referral, this presentation reminds us of the continued importance of communication expertise and the skillful use of tools in providing care for people with cancer in the survivorship phase.



Nursing & Allied Health Workshop with Prof. Stewart Dunn

Professor Stewart Dunn facilitated a two hour workshop called 'Mopping up after Bad News' before this year's annual forum. The workshop examined instinctive health professional problem solving responses in common communication scenarios with patients.

Participants identified their own preferred response style and worked in groups to identify which types of responses are most effective with four of the common emotional states we can see in patients: distress, disbelief, anger and anxiety.

The workshop was a great opportunity for clinicians from across the region to meet and explore evidence based approaches to improving how they communicate with patients.

Places in the workshop were snapped up by nursing and allied health professionals from across the region. There was even a lengthy waiting list. One improvement that NEMICS will put in place for next year is to request three days notice of cancellation to avoid the problem of no-shows without notice so more places can be offered to interested staff.

Successful Professional Development Grant Applicants

Congratulations to the successful applicants for the April 2012 round of NEMICS professional development grants:

Judy Allen

Occupational Therapist, Eastern Health

- Develop and deliver eight hour workshop: Skin integrity pressure area prevention & management in the oncology / palliative care patient

Rosemary Hoyt & Juanita Hardy

Clinical Nurse Consultant Bone Marrow Transplant Coordinator & Oncology Nurse Educator, Austin Health

- Study day to inspire nurse led research

Margaret Haugh

Nurse Unit Manager, Day Oncology Unit, Eastern Health

- Up-skilling nurses in administration of chemotherapy in an inpatient setting

Chris Hamilton

Director, Radiation Oncology Service, Austin Health

- Half-day communication skills training workshop by Prof Stewart Dunn for medical staff

Avril Mackenzie & Penny Smith

Physiotherapist & Occupational Therapist, Austin Health

- Develop a business case for an outpatient oncology rehabilitation model for Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre

Stephen Tucker

Associate Program Director Specialist Clinics, Eastern Health

- Develop and deliver two day course: "Introduction to Oncology" for generalist nursing staff

Michael Cooney

Haematology / Oncology Nurse Practitioner, Northern Health

- Establish a program of nursing education and assessment for handling and administration of chemotherapy and care of oncology patients



Back Row L to R: Juanita Hardy, Rosemary Hoyt, Avril Mackenzie, Margaret Haugh, Penny Smith, Judy Allen
Front Row L to R: Chris Hamilton & Stephen Tucker (*Michael Cooney absent*)

Communication Skills Training Workshop by Prof Dunn

By Professor Chris Hamilton

As a part of a NEMICS professional development grant, Professor Stewart Dunn took 13 medical staff from across the NEMICS region on a very valuable teaching and surrogate exercise about medical communication with oncology patients.

Stewart's style was very engaging and he quickly subdivided us into learning styles which formed a framework for how we respond to patients' emotional and medical needs. As expected the senior academics were all "reflectors" in keeping with their genteel and introspective natures.

Stewart's experience shone through in terms of his skill at running an engaging workshop which gave considerable insight into how we practice and communicate in potentially difficult settings.

Stewart was ably accompanied by actor Veronica Porcaro, who provided us with challenging scenarios involving highly anxious, depressed or angry patients.

All involved found this a valuable exercise for self reflection and learning tips from others. As predicted, some of the more junior medical registrars performed extremely well.

In common with most of the cancer care world, we believe that improving our skill set and knowledge in this area must always be a good thing.

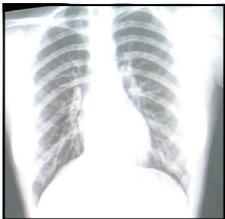
We look forward to further collaborations with NEMICS and others in relation to oncology communication.

Region Wide Melanoma MDM to Commence

A sign that the NEMICS network is continuing to strengthen came last month when a group of clinicians from the three health services that provide care for patients with melanoma met together to discuss the details for a region wide multidisciplinary meeting (MDM). This MDM will start in mid October.

The participants will link in with each other using the WebEx online meeting technology. This means that oncologists, surgeons radiologists, pathologists and others can meet in cyberspace to discuss the best treatment options for their patients without having to travel. This is the first region wide MDM for NEMICS.

Building Digital Bridges to Aid MDM Discussions



transporting the images on a CD.

MIA Victoria provide radiological support to the seven Eastern Health MDMs held in the nearby Peter MacCallum room. However, to date there has been no link between MIA Victoria and the radiology department within Eastern Health. The process for MDMs involved manually

Using this link, the radiology investigations done by Eastern Health are uploaded onto the MIA system before each meeting, enabling the MIA radiologist to prepare a presentation for the MDM. This new process also means that the quality of the images is better and they are equipped with all the required viewing tools such as screen splitting and picture manipulation. Being a two-way bridge, the MIA images of patients being discussed in the MDMs being held in Eastern Health can also be sent via this link.

A digital bridge has now been built so that images can travel securely in both directions between MIA Victoria and Eastern Health radiology department.

Victorian Cancer Patient Experience Survey

The Victorian Cancer Patient Experience Survey project is now in its second phase. This phase will focus on validating the survey tool and testing the methodology for identifying patients in the state wide administration of the survey. Austin Health, Ballarat Health and Barwon Health are three health services that have been invited to test the survey process.

This survey, developed in consultation with 96 consumers and health professionals, asks specific questions about elements of care relevant to cancer patients.

The importance of this project is in having access to information from a large sample of consumers in Victoria about their actual experience rather than their opinions. The survey is structured in such a way to document experiences along a patient journey from suspected cancer to post treatment.

This information will help us to measure quality of care provided by public hospitals from a patient's perspective. Having survey responses based on experience also enables service providers to compare their health service with others and to identify areas where performance can be improved.

Supportive Care Project Officers

Phase II of the NEMICS funded supportive care project has commenced. All four NEMICS health services have a supportive care project officer in place for this phase to extend the scope of supportive care screening.

Sara Jorgensen has started at Austin Health. Sara is a former breast care nurse and is embracing the project with enthusiasm. Bernadette Zappa will be starting next month at Eastern Health. Bernadette, an occupational therapist by training, comes to Eastern Health from Northern Health, where she was working to improve aspects of specialist clinics.

Sara and Bernadette will join Gen Francis at the Northern, Cathie Corrick at Mercy Hospital for Women and Judy Allen in their work to improve the accessibility and sustainability of supportive care screening across the region.