

## Victorian Integrated Cancer Services Conference

The first Victorian Integrated Cancer Services Conference was held in May, proof that the combined efforts in reforming and improving cancer services across the state are making a big impact. This conference was a showcase for the projects and progress of the ICS clinical networks.

The two days were a wonderful opportunity to hear about the implementation projects from health services and ICS around the state. We got to hear about what is working and where the difficulties lay. Innovative models of care and workforce structure were particularly interesting.

The themes that came through were the need for data to support efforts to improve the cancer system, workforce development and the importance of integrating primary care and cancer services in the acute health settings.

The conference also provided an opportunity to hear about the research that is being carried out in the areas of carers for people experiencing cancer and the impact of cultural and linguistic differences in managing the cancer system.

Patient centeredness and its importance in everything we do was reinforced by two innovative presentations by Dr Kerry Reid-Searl and Beth Wilson.

Over 200 delegates attended. Seven abstracts were accepted from the NEMICS region - two presentations and five posters. The obvious success of the inaugural conference led to the announcement of the second VICS conference for 2015.



## Dr Phillip Parente Appointed Director of Cancer Services, Eastern Health



Dr Parente has worked as a Medical Oncologist at Eastern Health since 2003, as Deputy Director since 2006 and as the Acting Director of Cancer Services since January 2013.

Whilst at Eastern Health he has developed and expanded the Lung / Melanoma / Genitourinary cancer services leading service delivery and research in these tumour types.

As Deputy Director, he has been actively involved with NEMICS in the Clinical Reference Groups and has represented Eastern Health accordingly.

Dr Parente has been a very active researcher and has been the lead investigator in numerous clinical oncological trials particularly within the tumour types melanoma, lung and genitourinary. He looks forward to this continuing in his new leadership role.

### Clinical Leadership Opportunity

Would you like to help guide the improvement and development of cancer services across the NEMICS region? Expressions of interest are being accepted for lead clinicians involved in providing cancer care to join our Clinical Reference Group. Please contact Carmel Vermeltfoort at [carmel.vermeltfoort@austin.org.au](mailto:carmel.vermeltfoort@austin.org.au) or 9496 3322 for more information.

## Patient Held Information Resource A Consumer Initiative

The NEMICS consumer reference group (CRG) is working with Directorate staff to develop a region wide, individualised patient held information resource.

The CRG has advocated strongly for providing cancer patients and their families with more personally tailored, individualised cancer information.

There is recognition that while a lot of generic cancer information is available, patients and families need and want more information about their specific cancer type, their treatment and the potential short and long term effects on them and their families.

Many local and national projects are moving towards supporting health consumers to be more informed and able to manage their own healthcare. Academic research also shows that giving written information helps patients to understand their diagnosis and treatment. It also assists them to coordinate their care better.

Last month NEMICS facilitated a workshop for consumers and clinicians with an interest in patient held information resources. A key aim of the session was to discuss the viability of developing a common patient held resource that could be used across services and sectors in the NEMICS region.



*Anne Kay, Janine Rossely and Lauren Hodgens*

Kirsten de Hennin and Lauren Hodgens (Eastern Health), Tina Griffiths (Austin Health) and Dr Prahlad Ho (Austin and Northern Health) all presented information on ideas relating to patient 'diaries, passports and folders' they have been developing and testing at a local level.

It is important to consider a unified approach especially as we know that cancer patients do not always receive all services and care under the one roof.

A copy of the summary report from this workshop can be found on the NEMICS website [www.nemics.org.au](http://www.nemics.org.au).

The NEMICS consumer reference group and Anna Mascitti (Service Improvement Facilitator – Coordinated Care) will continue to develop the ideas coming from the workshop .

For further information on this initiative, please contact Anna Mascitti on 9496 3261 or by email [anna.mascitti@austin.org.au](mailto:anna.mascitti@austin.org.au)



Workshop participants included consumers and representatives from Mercy Hospital for Women, Ringwood Private, Radiation Oncology Victoria, Austin, Eastern and Northern Health services. Sheila Hirst facilitated the session.

Janine Rossely and Anne Kay (Chairs of the CRG) provided a powerful opening presentation on why this is important. Both provided many personal examples of the need to be able to keep track of relevant and important information. Patients and families are asked for certain information each time they have an appointment with a new clinician – cancer related or otherwise. A single resource for all this information can be enormously valuable.



## Spinal Cord Compression

### Creating a formalised referral pathway

NEMICS clinicians have identified a need to improve processes so that patients with malignant spinal cord compression (MSCC) get rapid and efficient access to surgery.

At present Austin is the only NEMICS health service that offers this low volume, high risk surgery. All MSCC patients presenting to a NEMICS health service other than the Austin should have rapid hospital transfer if they need surgery.

The absence of an agreed pathway across the NEMICS region could result in delays to receiving the best care.

Some factors that can delay access to surgery include: MRI access, lack of information about the best surgical or radio-therapeutic management, problems with the transfer of imaging, and hospital bed availability.

An audit of all MSCC presentations to NEMICS health services in 2011-2012 has been done to map current referral pathways and measure efficiencies in diagnosis, referral and transfer of patients who need surgery. Audit data will be mapped against NICE guidelines for the management of MSCC (U.K.).

Data is currently being analysed in preparation for steering committee review. Further updates will be provided in the next newsletter edition.

For more information about the project, please contact Paul Mitchell or Paula Howell on 9496 3886 or email [paula.howell@austin.org.au](mailto:paula.howell@austin.org.au)

## NEMICS Welcomes New Staff Member

We recently welcomed Alexandra Philpott (Alex) to the NEMICS Directorate in the new role of Service Improvement Facilitator – Coordination and Integration. Alex comes most recently from the UK's National Health Service (NHS), where she managed and implemented a series of pan-London projects as part of a four year program to re-design cancer services in the region.



## Community Ambassador Program Update

We first introduced our Community Ambassador Program in the December 2012 Newsletter. This is a program developed by our NEMICS Consumer Reference Group to raise community awareness of the support and information available following a cancer diagnosis and how to find it.

In the first six months of the year, we have provided four presentations to community groups, including Probus Clubs, a Lions Club and the Salvation Army. Information contained within the presentation was very well received with many attendees saying that this information was useful for all people in the community. All our Community Ambassadors have had a cancer diagnosis themselves or have cared for someone who has. They are very willing to share their experience and knowledge and help raise community awareness of these issues.

If you are a member of any community group including; church, social, philanthropic, or volunteer, and would like a Community Ambassador to speak to your group please contact Melissa Shand on 9496 3831 or email [melissa.shand@austin.org.au](mailto:melissa.shand@austin.org.au).

## Cancer Services in the Region

A comprehensive map of cancer services across the region is being developed. The map will include location and access arrangements. The aim is to include both public and private providers of cancer care. A health service profile for each site will provide access, capacity, and activity information for a number of services and tumour streams.

It is expected that this service map will help to assess levels of service to make sure that established quality and safety standards are met.

An outline of the role of each cancer service will be developed based on the work being done by the Victorian Department of Health with local clinical input. Day oncology and radiotherapy services are to be assessed over the winter to test this approach.

For further information please contact Alex Philpott on 03 9496 3048 or email [alex.philpott@austin.org.au](mailto:alex.philpott@austin.org.au).

## ONJCWC Cancer Services Volunteers

Tracey Brown, Manager of Volunteer Services, recently welcomed 22 newly trained volunteers to the army of willing helpers for Cancer Services at the ONJCWC. An enthusiastic team of 55 volunteers now provide support and assistance to patients and carers visiting the centre.

The volunteer program rosters its assistants to spend time helping patients and their loved ones access a range of activities throughout ONJCWC. Whether it be telling them about the programs available, accompanying patients to appointments, giving a hand massage, taking them for a walk in the fresh air, teaching them to crochet or making a hot cuppa, volunteers see the importance of their role in helping people feel pampered, supported and that they matter.



*"We have recruited a team of amazing people who really make a difference to the experience of our patients and their loved ones"* Tracey said at the graduation ceremony for the volunteers who undertook the 10 week training course.

Volunteers found the training program provided them with excellent knowledge, support and experience to move into their new roles with confidence.

*"Having completed the training course, I feel very inspired and excited being a part of such an enthusiastic, impassioned and truly dedicated team at ONJCWC, who really make the meaning of "You Matter" matter."*

**Sigrid – ONJCWC volunteer**

Patients and carers wishing to access volunteer support can speak with any clinical staff member to make a referral, or stop and have a chat with any of the volunteers throughout the Centre, identifiable by their green lanyards.

The next round of training will commence in June, followed by a third round in September 2013. If you, or anyone you know, might be interested in volunteering please contact [ONJCWC.volunteers@austin.org.au](mailto:ONJCWC.volunteers@austin.org.au) or 9496 9602.

## Do you know someone affected by cancer? A community awareness raising initiative

A cancer diagnosis is never easy but knowing what local community help is available can make things easier and give you, your loved one or your friend greater confidence to manage during this difficult time.

Studies have shown that people with cancer who receive education and help with psychological and social issues have lower rates of physical symptoms associated with cancer and its treatment.

A 30 minute information presentation is available to community groups detailing :

- The range of helpful cancer support services and resources available
- Who to call when you need help
- How you can find reliable information and support.



Presentations are provided by a NEMICS Community Ambassador. All our Ambassadors have had an experience of cancer and understand the impact that such a diagnosis can have.

If you would like a NEMICS Community Ambassador to speak to your group, please contact Melissa Shand on 9496 3322, or email [melissa.shand@austin.org.au](mailto:melissa.shand@austin.org.au)