

Spanish National Cancer Research Centre (CNIO) participates in a €1,2 million initiative to improve European cancer communications

An initiative to boost cancer prevention, treatment and care throughout Europe by improving communications within the cancer community kicks off today (Monday 20 July) with the launch of a new website: www.eurocancercoms.eu. The project will involve all those with an interest in cancer, from researchers and doctors to patients.

The Eurocancercoms project is an initiative of the European Institute of Oncology and is led by ECCO – the European CanCer Organisation and *ecancermedicalsecience* (an online, open access journal). It is funded by a €1,2 million grant from the European Commission's FP7 programme. The aim is to establish a single, efficient network for cancer communication in Europe, and the new website plays a key role in this ambitious initiative.

The Spanish National Cancer Research Centre (CNIO), as a leading European centre in cancer research, actively participates in the project. It contributes to the establishment of the infrastructure needed to facilitate access to cancer-related literature and the data generated by cancer genome projects.

Professor Alexander M.M. Eggermont, president of ECCO, explained: "There is an urgent need in Europe to improve communications between everyone working in cancer and between them and patients. Europe has an increasing number of cancer patients and worse outcomes for care, despite having better quality clinical research than the USA. Cancer survival is unacceptably variable in different European countries. A previous study (EUROCAN+PLUS) identified poor communication between all those involved in cancer care as one of the main reasons for these poor outcomes. Eurocancercoms aims to address these problems by creating a 'one-stop shop' for the whole cancer community from scientists to patients."

The principal investigator of Eurocancercoms is Professor Umberto Veronesi, scientific director of the European Institute of Oncology in Milan. Professor Eggermont and Professor Gordon McVie (founding editor of *ecancermedicalsecience*) are leading the project, while

Richard Sullivan, Professor at King's Health Partners Integrated Cancer Centre at King's College London (UK), is the project manager.

Eurocancercoms will look at issues surrounding the communication and dissemination of cancer information across Europe, identify the bottlenecks and suggest solutions. It will do this by:

- examining the flow of information between basic scientists and other healthcare professionals
- assessing the way cancer research results are disseminated and identifying the existing barriers to successful dissemination
- establishing searchable databases for clinical trials and guidelines that are available to all involved in cancer care, including patients
- using new technologies, particularly internet-based technologies, to create a networked cancer community, including health professionals, patients, consumer groups and industry
- writing policies for promoting the best ways of disseminating cancer science across Europe.

Prof Sullivan, who also heads the European Cancer Managers' Forum which examines cancer research and funding in Europe, said: "I think this is a unique opportunity for cancer in Europe. It is a marvellous opportunity to understand what are the key issues in cancer communication and to create novel ways of getting information out to both the professionals and the patients.

"This will be the first time that lots of very large groups involved in cancer in Europe have come together to improve cancer communications. There's no doubt that people of all ages and demographic profiles are using the internet, including cancer professionals. We need to understand 21st century communications, particularly electronic communications. For instance, at the moment the way we communicate with patients is still the classical method of putting leaflets in doctors' surgeries; but patients are not picking these up any more; they are going online and finding information on the web and through social networking sites. People are changing and electronic resources are the future. We are working in a different world and the way that we work has to reflect this."

He concluded: "Eurocancercoms will build on Europe's strengths in terms of existing cancer networks, cancer information websites and so on. Europe is very diverse, but we will be able to network all these different sources of information together and that's what makes Eurocancercoms unique. It's ambitious but we wouldn't be doing it if we didn't think we could deliver."

ECCO – the European CanCer Organisation – exists to uphold the right of all European cancer patients to the best possible treatment and care and to promote interaction between all organisations involved in cancer research, education, treatment and care at the European level. For more information, visit: www.ecco-org.eu

ecancermedicalscience is an open access cancer journal founded by the European Institute of Oncology in Milan (www.ieo.it). For more information, visit: www.ecancermedicalscience.com

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