

Press Release

Issue date: 6 September 2007

International visit to pioneer cancer group boosts influence to help patients

The work of Bath Cancer Research, a small local charity based at the Royal United Hospital, is striding forward in its ground-breaking work in pioneering personalised laboratory testing of drug effectiveness in cancer patients.

An Icelandic laboratory is now setting up as a cancer testing centre after two visiting experts gleaned all they could from the Bath unit.

The recent visit in August by Neurosurgeon Dr. Gardar Gudmundsson and neurobiologist Dr. Finnbogi Thormodsson from Reykjavik's National Hospital and Reykjavik University, coincided with the unit's 25th anniversary year of research into 'Individualised tumour response' testing, the new name recently given to this type of work.

The visitors were shown every aspect of Bath Cancer Research's accredited processes, which involve the use of a special device which uses eight tiny wells in which a patient's tumour cells are incubated with various anti-cancer drugs to find which one works best for that particular patient.

At the same time Colin Fraser, a leukaemia patient from Italy, checked in to benefit from the test, with the aim of directing his doctor towards the right treatment. The visiting scientists, one also a medical doctor, were able to witness first-hand the special process that the Bath scientists hope to become common practice whenever a patient or doctor needs guidance when prescribing the most effective drug to combat the cancer.

Gardar said: "We are inspired by Dr Bosanquet's pioneering work - we will set up a lab in Reykjavik, aiming at doing preclinical drug tests on all cancer patients that require chemotherapy."

The charity's director Dr Andrew Bosanquet says: "We have had a week of international collaboration at Bath Cancer Research, and are encouraged by the amount of support we are receiving from around the world. Our visitors from Reykjavik are eager to learn our technique with a view to performing their own service, one which is sorely needed for many cancer patients worldwide."

Fundraising manager Haydn Wilkins says: "Visits like this show that this laboratory has something special to offer the medical world. The sooner the test is scientifically approved to become a front-line tool, the better. But money is always needed."

Ends

Photo:

Pictured: Dr Andrew Bosanquet (Director of Bath Cancer Research) [centre, at back], then from left to right, Colin Fraser (a leukaemia sufferer) and his wife Sonia, Dr Gardar Gudmundsson (Neurosurgeon), and Dr Finnbogi Thormodsson (Neurobiologist), and Justin Durant (Biomedical Scientist).

Editor's Notes:

(1) Bath Cancer Research receives no funding from the NHS or the Government but relies heavily on local support to further its research

(2) Dr Bosanquet is chairing an online meeting of over 40 experts in the field of laboratory testing of anticancer drugs from 10 other countries. The experts were meeting to agree a name for the work, and a plea from Colin Fraser's wife Sonia, originally from Colombia, for the name to be 'understandable by patients' assisted the group to finalise the name 'Individualised tumour response' testing. This is testing 'the effect of anticancer treatments on tumour cells freshly removed from patients' - research that Bath Cancer Research has been at the forefront of for 25 years.

(3) Bath Cancer Research has launched a £300,000 appeal to coincide with its 25th anniversary to complete a large clinical trial, the results of which will go towards assessing the effectiveness of our test.

(4) Bath Cancer Research can be contacted via email: bcr@ruh.nhs.uk or telephone 01225 824124 or fax 01225 824114 website: caltri.org