

Leading cancer research and education

Psychosocial Oncology Group, University of Sussex

Meeting Global Challenges

The incidence of cancer is a growing problem worldwide, in England alone 242,200 new cases were recorded in 2006 (ONS). Incidence is predicted to rise by a third between 2001 and 2020 but mortality is falling due to better screening, public health and improvement in treatments. Despite these advances discussing a diagnosis of cancer and its treatment options remain complex. Hence there is a need for good health education for patients and communication skills training for doctors and nurses involved in their care.

A Multidisciplinary Approach

This centre's success is built on a multidisciplinary approach. Researchers in both psychoncology and sociology work closely with health care professionals within the field of cancer, both nationally and internationally. This includes consultants, nurses, department of health managers, medical statisticians, clinical trial units, cancer charities and industry. Together we develop pragmatic programmes of psychosocial research and conduct educational interventions that benefit both patients and health professionals.

Research Impact

- Research initiatives have influenced practice and contributed towards important guidance including the Cancer Plan (September 2000) and the Cancer Reform Strategy (December 2007). Associated courses attract Continuing Medical Education (CMEs) and Professional Development (CPD) points from Royal Colleges and other relevant bodies.
- Effective measurement of quality of life (QoL) when labelling novel drugs is of increasing interest to industry and charities. The group has been at the forefront of QoL research for many years and have developed several psychometrically-robust measures, many of which have been translated and are used in multi-national trials.
- Successful anti-cancer treatment always comes with some costs that may be short or long term, acute effects such as hair-loss, nausea and vomiting, or fatigue. The group have conducted interventional studies that promote well being in patients experiencing these symptoms.
- The group was commissioned by the DoH to produce a DVD to explain the issues surrounding co-payments of top-up fees for drugs. This DVD portrayed the different options available and helped ministers in their deliberations which culminated in the recommendations made in the Richard's Report (2008).
- The group was also commissioned by the Medical Research Council and Cancer Research UK (CRUK) to produce informational DVDs for patients considering participation in specific treatment trials to aid patient information and increase recruitment to trials.

Funding Sources

The centre was initially established from HEFCE QR funding and from concurrent Cancer Research UK programme grants. Today it is funded by grants from CRUK, MRC, Industry, Hospital Charities, DoH and NIHR commissioned research.