



Forum welcomes new Director of Clinical Research

The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre Research & Innovation (R&I) Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Forum welcomes Prof Christian Ottensmeier to the post of Director of Clinical Research.

Prof Ottensmeier, a Consultant in Medical Oncology at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre and Chair of Immuno-Oncology at the University of Liverpool (UoL), is an internationally recognised researcher into human immune responses to cancer.

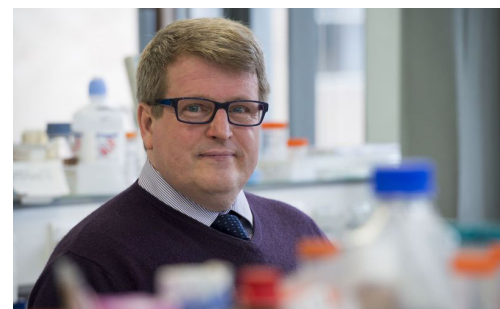
He recently gave a presentation to the Forum on his current research activity, which includes his work as Principal Investigator for the Transgene trial, a first-in-class approach to making personalised therapeutic vaccines for head and neck cancers (see page 3).

Prof Ottensmeier is also Visiting Professor of Experimental Medicine at the University of Southampton, where he completed his PhD and spent much of his career before joining

Clatterbridge, UoL and the Liverpool Head and Neck Centre in August 2020. He also holds an Adjunct Professorship at the La Jolla Institute for Immunology in the USA.

Prof Ottensmeier said: "I am very pleased to be appointed to this prestigious role and I am greatly looking forward to the opportunities and challenges we face in progressing cancer research.

"Patient and public involvement is incredibly important to our research at Clatterbridge and I will be working closely with the Forum to ensure all our research activities are shaped by patients, carers and the public."



Prof Christian Ottensmeier

Director of Clinical Research

National recognition for Forum member Tony

R&I PPI Forum member Tony Murphy was recently recognised for his work in a team creating new consent forms for patients having to undergo radiotherapy.

As a lay member of a group from the Royal College of Radiologists, Tony reviewed new forms to remove inconsistencies in current ones across the UK.

The review took 15 months and the new form was piloted for breast and prostate cancers before rolling out to 10 other cancers. Most rare cancers will be covered soon.

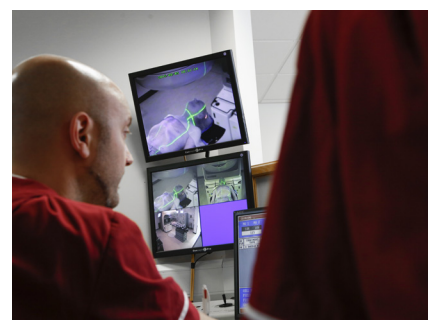
The hard work of the team was rewarded when they won the BMJ Cancer Care Team of the Year Award.

Dr Gillian Heap, Director of Research & Innovation Operations, said: "We are very proud of Tony and all the hard work he has put into this project.

"It is very important that patients and the public are

involved in all aspects of healthcare services as they can provide a valuable insight into how the public perceives them.

"Tony's experience is of huge benefit to our PPI Forum and we welcome other patients and members of the public to get involved in helping to make all our services the best they can be."



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Covid-19's impact on staff mental health

Clatterbridge Research Nurse Dr Lynda Appleton has been studying the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health and wellbeing of our healthcare staff.

R&I PPI Forum

The Forum continues to meet on a monthly basis and at each meeting a guest speaker outlines their area of research, followed by a Question and Answer session.

We have had some very exciting sessions over the past few months and there are many other interesting presentations planned for 2022.

We always welcome new members to the Forum, which aims to be a voice for patients, their carers and the public within Clatterbridge's Research & Innovation Directorate.

So, if you have an interest in cancer research, would like to hear of the latest pioneering work at Clatterbridge and want to help influence it, please email: mary.jordan3@nhs.net

Her findings have been presented to national conferences and she also explained her research at a meeting of the Forum.

Individual experiences of how Clatterbridge staff managed their psychological wellbeing during the pandemic were collected using diaries and interviews over a four-month period, from December 2020 to April 2021. A total of 102 staff were recruited.

Dr Appleton explained to the Forum that four main themes were identified: Self-management, delivery of patient care, managing professional roles and managing employer/employee relationships. Staff used different strategies to manage wellbeing, such as concealing emotions and speaking out.

Dr Appleton said the transition to remote working and loss of some face-to-face contact with patients required adjustments from staff to new ways of working, particularly when providing psychological support to patients and keeping families connected.

Findings from the research included that communication between the workforce and the Trust was important to understanding wellbeing needs and a lack of time was one of the barriers to staff accessing wellbeing resources.

Dr Appleton said the research team was now working with the Trust to implement the recommendations of the study.

She told the Forum: **"We are grateful to staff for their time and commitment to this study and we look forward to contributing to the staff wellbeing agenda in the Trust."**

Search for vaccines for cancer

Clatterbridge's Prof Christian Christian Ottensmeier gave a presentation to the Forum about his research into a possible vaccine for cancer.

Prof Ottensmeier described how immunotherapy – which helps the body's immune system fight disease – has become a standard treatment for cancer.

He explained that rather than poisoning cancer cells, as in chemotherapy and radiotherapy, immunotherapy aims to stimulate the immune system into attacking cancer cells.

Prof Ottensmeier outlined how he is researching a 'vaccine' for cancer by linking the cancer gene sequence with the sequence from tetanus, with the aim of delivering a treatment which can trick the immune system to fighting cancer cells instead.

A number of clinical trials are set to begin over the coming months looking at different platforms for this new technology, with four patients consenting to be part of this research so far.

Prof Ottensmeier said studies show that results are better with this treatment in cases where there is less amounts of cancer, so early diagnosis is essential for better outcomes.

The professor is hopeful that eventually he will be able to develop vaccines for individual patients by separating genes and creating personalised treatments for them.

New patient for complex clinical trial

The clinical trials team has signed up a patient to a hard-to-recruit-to study.

The Paradigm Study is complex and involves glioblastoma, a fast-growing malignant brain tumour where patients need to start treatment within six weeks of surgery.

The tumour tissue requires gene testing prior to patient consent to the trial, with results taking 7-10 days. Patients also need a scan, but slots for this are limited. The study drug must start three days before radiotherapy, which requires close working with the team. The drug used also interacts with many other medications.

Nurse Pembe Yesildag thanked Dr Shenoy for identifying the patient, Dr Mehta and Dr May for their collaboration during screening and randomisation and Sharon McGinn, Clinical Trials Radiographer, for her support and flexible approach during radiotherapy planning.

Pembe said the clinical trials pharmacy team were extremely efficient in screening a new trial prescription and issuing the medication within an hour.

She said: "Overall, without close collaboration of all parties, we would not be able to recruit and treat this patient within the very tight timelines we had."



Clatterbridge's role in experimental cancer medicine



There is a network of 18 Experimental Cancer Medicine Centres (ECMCs) across the country – and the Forum was given a presentation about how Clatterbridge is working within our local one to further research into cancer.

Charlotte Rawcliffe, ECMC Operational Director, told the Forum about the collaboration between the UoL and The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre in the Liverpool ECMC.

She explained that the ECMC bridges the gap between laboratory research and clinical trials. The Liverpool centre uses its funding for translational research, biobanking and early phase trials. It concentrates mainly on pancreatic and blood cancers with some work on liver, breast and head and neck cancers.

Charlotte described some of the studies underway at the ECMC and explained why Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) is so important to the centre. She said it enables studies to be relevant, acceptable and understandable to participants. It also provides a better explanation of the research being undertaken as well as a channel for communication of results.

She gave some examples of patient involvement, including writing lay summaries, joining the National PPI group and attending ECMC board meetings.

The importance of radiotherapy research

Research and Development Radiographer Louise Turtle gave a talk to the Forum about her role.

She explained how high doses of radiotherapy kill cancer cells or slows their growth by damaging their DNA.

Cancer cells whose DNA is damaged beyond repair stop dividing or die. It takes days or weeks of treatment before DNA is damaged enough for cancer cells to die and cancer cells keep dying for weeks or months after radiotherapy ends.

Research studies and clinical trials allow the development of drug protocols in combination with radiotherapy to improve the treatment.

Louise explained that these studies are important because they contribute to knowledge and progress on cancer treatment and care. It is a way to confirm treatments are effective, reliable and safe – and ultimately benefit patients.

She said research into newer technological advancements in radiotherapy is also important, to justify their implementation and adapt treatment to benefit patients.



Louise Turtle
Research and Development Radiographer

"Studies are important because they contribute to knowledge and progress on cancer treatment and care."



How research benefits from our very own charity

They say charity begins at home – well, that is very true of our research, which is helped by our very own fundraisers and donors at The Clatterbridge Cancer Charity.

Over many years, the charity has funded a range of projects which help to make Clatterbridge a place that stays in people's hearts, by funding research projects and also supporting ground-breaking projects for patient care, including bringing cancer treatment closer to patients' homes.

COVID-19 has meant that some of the charity's much-loved fundraising events that people across Cheshire and Merseyside have been involved with over many years, have had to be cancelled or adapted to ensure safety during the pandemic.

One of the new events for 2022, which people are supporting to raise funds, is the Glow Green Night Walk, in Liverpool, which will be held on World Cancer Day on Friday, February 4th.



Taking in views of some of Liverpool's most iconic landmarks, including the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral, the Radio City Tower and our own cancer hospital, Glow Green will challenge entrants to walk 8km and enjoy fantastic entertainment along the route. It is a chance to paint the town green!

The 2019 Go Green for Clatterbridge 5k event saw the team from Research (pictured) take first place.

Katrina Bury, Head of Charity, said: "The funding of research into new cancer treatments and care has always been central to the charity and we are incredibly pleased that we have been able to continue to do this, despite the challenges of COVID-19.

"Our supporters are incredibly proud that they have been able to support the wonderful research teams and talented individuals that give us all hope of

therapies that could improve outcomes for people with cancer."

For more information on Glow Green Night Walk, go to: www.clatterbridgecc.nhs.uk/events/glow-green-night-walk

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Get Involved

www.clatterbridgecc.nhs.uk

Public and patient involvement is central to all activities at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre, including research.

There are various ways that patients and the public can get involved in research, such as:

- involvement as a member of a research team
- advising on potential methods of recruiting research participants
- learning new knowledge such as ways to gather and analyse research data
- being a member of different meetings and committees
- providing feedback on research documents, e.g. information sheets and questionnaires
- supporting the education and training of research students
- setting priority areas for research and identifying specific research questions
- sharing knowledge and learning about research with others, e.g. giving verbal updates, presenting at/ attending conferences
- participating in a clinical trial, being actively involved in the development of research projects and dissemination of research findings
- joining our PPI Forum, where you will be made most welcome.

If you are interested in becoming a public or patient representative for research at Clatterbridge please contact Mary Jordan for more information by emailing: mary.jordan3@nhs.net

