

S33. The development of a Cancer Prevention Research Network (North West of England)

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Background: There has been considerable increase in our understanding of the biology and epidemiology of cancer over the past two decades, but arguably a failure in many areas to convert this knowledge into prevention strategies at a patient and population level. Against this background, we have developed a Cancer Prevention Research Network in the North West of England (population: 15 million) with the specific purpose of bringing together researchers from a wide range of biomedical and social science backgrounds forming a cohesive platform to seed, develop and deliver future cancer prevention research.

Methods: From early 2007, we used the Institute of Health Science (an existing network between our University and teaching hospitals) to identify and invite potential interested researchers to participate. From this, a further collection of potential investigators in other centres were identified and contacted (i.e. the network is not geographically restrictive). A steering committee was established with cross-disciplinary representation, including a users' subgroup. A constitution was ratified and an overriding aim clearly stated: to encourage, facilitate and coordinate high-quality cancer prevention research.

Results: The Network was launched in September 2007 with over 80 researchers participating. There

are three subgroups (from some 19 disciplines): basic science and bio-markers, clinical trials and epidemiology, and behavioural and social sciences. The Network's scope includes primary, secondary and tertiary cancer prevention. A website has been established and a web-based portfolio of research activities in development. The Network has developed partnerships with other research interested bodies, local government and the pharmaceutical industry. The basic machinery of the network is theme-related workshops with explicitly defined a priori objectives. Cancer survivorship and national screening programmes have already been identified as areas of strength in which to enhance research activities.

Conclusions: The development of a cancer prevention research network was facilitated by the presence of an existing health-related network linking potential investigators across universities, research institutions, hospitals and the community. The aims of the Network are purposefully ambitious – its success will be benchmarked against increased research incomes and publication outputs in the future, and ultimately patient and population benefit.