EORTC—Activities and Research

The European organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC) has reported on its activities and current research for 1990–91.* The organization has four branches: treatment, epidemiology and prevention, research, and education. The epidemiology/prevention and education branches, the International Agency for Cancer Research (IARC) in Lyon, and the European School of Oncology (ESO) in Milan are independent but collaborate with EORTC activities. EORTC supports the new drug development office (NDDO) in the research branch. The data centre in Brussels gathers and analyses data for protocols performed by the participating disease-orientated cooperative groups.

Seventeen groups collaborating on protocol-directed trials from more than 300 European institutions have gathered and analysed information on over 50,000 cancer patients that has been sent to the data centre. These groups are based around a particular specialty or tumour type. Quality control is especially important, organized by peer review or site visits. As well as the expected specialty groups based on clinical and pharmacological screening or research, radiotherapy, and antimicrobial therapy, there are study groups on data management, heavy particle therapy, quality of life, and receptors.

In 1989 the data centre entered details of 6101 new patients. 196 studies were being monitored: 101 were open to patient entry, 81 were closed to entry but open to follow-up, and 14 were closed to follow-up. 92 studies were phase II trials and 97 were phase III. An estimated 22,000 patients were followed-up by the data centre in 1989.

The data centre, with a grant from the European Community (EC), has developed 'EuroCODE' (European Computerized Oncology Data Exchange) to improve communication between oncologists in Europe. The 'Physician Data Query' (PDQ), the data base of cancer treatment organized by the US National Cancer Institute (NCI), is available on EuroCODE. This centre is also working with other national or regional organizations to prepare for meta-analysis of studies where patient accrual is slow or uneven.

The epidemiology and prevention branch, in cooperation with IARC, has started two pilot studies to identify precursors of future malignancy in patients treated for lymphoma or testicular cancer. Also, in collaboration with the SEARCH programme of IARC, a multicentre protocol has been devised to investigate the aetiology of childhood leukaemias. A study is being established by the EORTC Melanoma Cooperative Group to investigate the subsequent risk of melanoma in patients with dysplasic or benign naevi. Centres outside EORTC and Europe can participate in this study.

The main aim of the research branch is to provide reports on experimental studies to clinical groups. The new drug development office (NDDO), part of this branch, is based at the Free University Hospital in Amsterdam. With this hospital and the Netherlands Cancer Institute, NDDO aims to acquire potential antitumour agents for evaluation and to shorten the lag between drug synthesis and early clinical studies. In 1988 NDDO evaluated 100 compounds of which, in 1989, 10 reached phase I study. NDDO has a collaborative agreement with the NCI and the UK Cancer Research Campaign. Drugs can enter clincial trial on either side of the Atlantic. Phase I data are collected such that approval by the US Food and Drug Administration is facilitated.

An undergraduate curriculum in oncology in Europe has been agreed by the education branch in conjunction with the EC Commission. A pilot group of medical schools will introduce the course starting in 1990. In addition this branch, which works closely with ESO, also publishes an annual list of postgraduate courses in *Reviews in Oncology*. In 1989 a study group of cancer nurses was started.

*EORTC. Organization Activities and Current Research, 1990–91. Brussels; EORTC, 1990, pp. 198.

European Association for Cancer Research

During the 1950s and 1960s, clinical studies were the focus of attention at many of the international cancer meetings and it became clear that there was a need for a forum for the discussion and evaluation of investigations concerned with basic aspects of research in cancer. In 1968, this led to the foundation of the European Association for Cancer Research (EACR), an organization of individual member scientists with a common aim to advance cancer research by facilitating communication between research workers.

The main task of the EACR was initially to organize a major meeting on cancer research in Europe. Biennial meetings of the Association have continued, and since 1971, when the first formal meeting was held in Brussels, the Association has met in Heidelberg, Nottingham, Lyon, Budapest, Copenhagen, Bratislava, Helsinki and, in 1989, in Galway. Future meetings of the EACR are to be held in Genoa, Dubrovnik and Berlin. In addition, the Association supports or sponsors symposia and workshops on specific research topics held throughout Europe and, during the past 10 years, around 25 meetings have received EACR sponsorships.

Interest in the activities of the Association has, like membership of the EACR, steadily increased. Our major meetings have proved to be popular and of a high scientific standard. Membership of the EACR now stands at 1300 cancer researchers with representatives in all of the major European countries, with some 350 members in Eastern Europe. The new climate there has already resulted in opportunities for improving lines of communication and after many difficult years, the exchange of information and experience has become a realistic possibility.

Our elected Executive Committee is advised by a Council of 25 members, each of whom represents a separate country. Members of the Council, as well as representing the interests of EACR members in their country, often provide a natural link between their national cancer societies and the Association. This affords the opportunity for co-ordinating activities and optimizing efforts in the promotion of meetings, workshops and courses.

Newsletters, circulated in the spring and autumn every year, provide the membership with information about the Association's activities as well as details of many other events and initiatives relating to cancer research in Europe. Our fellowship programmes (the EACR Travel Fellowship Programme and EACR-Italian Fellowship Programme) are intended to promote the exchange of information and acquisition of knowledge and technical skills in cancer research.

As part of the EACR's contribution to the activities of the Federation of European Cancer Societies (FECS), efforts are being made to co-ordinate our future meetings with the biennial European Conferences on Clinical Oncology (ECCO). These are organized by the member European cancer societies comprising the Federation, of which the EACR is among the founding members. In 1991, our XIth EACR meeting in Genoa (3–6 November 1991) will be held in the week after the ECCO meeting in Florence (27–31 October 1991). Our meeting in Genoa will then be followed by a joint symposium with the American Association for Cancer Research to be held in Santa Margherita in Italy (7–9 November 1991). This co-ordination of activities is an exciting development in cancer research in Europe since it fosters the integration of basic and applied research and emphasises the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to resolve the cancer problem. The new *European Journal of Cancer* is clearly the natural vehicle to carry the reports and information about these various activities and the EACR is pleased to continue its support of this, our official journal.

The EACR gratefully acknowledges the generous support of its major sponsors, the Italian Association for Cancer Research, the Swiss Cancer League and the Belgian Association Against Cancer in addition to the Stuttgarter Bank, Mercedes Benz and Sterling Oncology Inc.

For further details about the European Association for Cancer Research, including membership application forms and details of forthcoming meetings, please contact the secretary: Dr Michael R. Price, Secretary of EACR, Cancer Research Campaign Laboratories, University of Nottingham, Nottingham NO7 2RD, U.K.

European School of Oncology

The seventh annual report of the European School of Oncology (ESO) was published in March, 1990.* An important aim of ESO is to reduce cancer mortality by training health professionals to avoid late diagnosis and inadequate treatment. During 1989, ESO continued and expended its educational, advisory, and editorial roles. 1480 participants from 35 countries attended courses organized by the teaching division. The programme included five-day residential courses on basic aspects of oncology and seminars on advanced or controversial topics. Courses in English were held at the University of Athens in Greece, Marie-Sklodowska-Curie Memorial Cancer Center in Poland, N.N. Petrov Institute of Oncology in Russia, and University of Zagreb in Yugoslavia. Six courses were held in the mother tongue in Argentina, Brazil, France, Italy, and Spain. ESO collaborated with the European Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology to arrange courses in Belgium, England, France, and Spain and with the Imperial Cancer Research Fund and the Medical Research Council in Oxford, UK (a colloquium on long-term clinical trial strategies). Four courses were organized with the European Oncology Nursing Society — 92 nurses attended these courses, which were held in the mother tongue in England, France, Germany, and Switzerland.

Last year ESO's advisory division organized 12 special task forces in collaboration with industry. Topics included diet and cancer, drug delivery, nuclear magnetic resonance, interferons, growth factors, psychosocial oncology, and air pollution. As part of its 'Europe Against Cancer' programme the Commission of the European Communities (CEC) asked the school to organize four advisory groups on controversial issues: passive smoking, vegetable fibre, 'Haemoccult' test and early diagnosis of colorectal cancers, and risk of cancer after repeat mammographies. Reports on each topic were presented in May, 1989. Again on behalf of the CEC, a textbook for general practitioners on breast cancer was published in every language of the Community.

ESO's editorial division prepared 850 course/seminar books last year, with abstracts, papers, and copies of slides. ESO task forces edited nine monographs on their subject areas (published by Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg). In addition this division of ESO has so far produced 18 videotapes on the main diagnostic and surgical techniques. Subjects include chemotherapy, cancer pain, Hodgkin's disease, and breast, head and neck, ovarian, bladder, and oesophageal cancer.

ESO runs an alumni club, whose members receive a newsletter and bibliographic research and are invited to refresher days. Last year two such days were arranged: interferons in onco-haematology (Zürich) and drug resistance in oncology (London).

Since 1983, 4992 people have participated in ESO's activities. Just over half were from EC countries, the remainder coming about equally from other European countries, Eastern Europe, and South America. The participants were most commonly (about a third) at senior assistant level; about a fifth were residents.

*European School of Oncology. Seventh Annual Report. Milan: ESO, 1990.