

Two similar alliances with research and hospital establishments in the U.S.A. and Germany are expected to take place this year. Cancer will be the main disease target of all these centres of molecular medicine. These three centres operating within three different healthcare systems will act as pilot centres to examine the practicality of delivering gene therapy to large numbers of patients in different countries.

SPAIN

Late Relapses Rare in Head and Neck Cancer

Long-term follow-up of patients with head and neck cancer show that late relapses are rare. "Follow-up for early diagnosis of a second or third neoplasia should be discontinued after 5 years of definitive therapy," concludes Dr Grau, Department of Medical Oncology, University of Barcelona Hospital Clinic, Barcelona, Spain.

Dr Grau and colleagues came to this conclusion from analysis of the long term follow-up of all 1355 patients with head and neck cancer in their hospital between 1973 and 1993. Median follow-up of the group was 10 years. Only in 7 patients was the second or third primary seen after 5 years of follow-up. The investigators suggest that curability should be observed for 5 years from definitive therapy of glottic, supraglottic, oral and nasopharyngeal cancer (and earlier in oropharyngeal and hypopharyngeal cancer). Further follow-up should be discontinued.

1. Grau JJ. Follow-up study in head and neck cancer: cure rate according to tumour location and stage. *Oncology* 1997, 54, 38-42.

U.K.

Europe's First Professor of Cancer Nursing

Professor Jessica Corner, of the Institute of Cancer Research, is the first Professor of Cancer Nursing to be appointed in Europe. The appointment is seen by senior nurses across Europe as a huge encouragement to European cancer nursing as it should foster thinking and research within the specialty across Europe. The Institute of Cancer Research is the largest provider of training for cancer nurses in Europe.

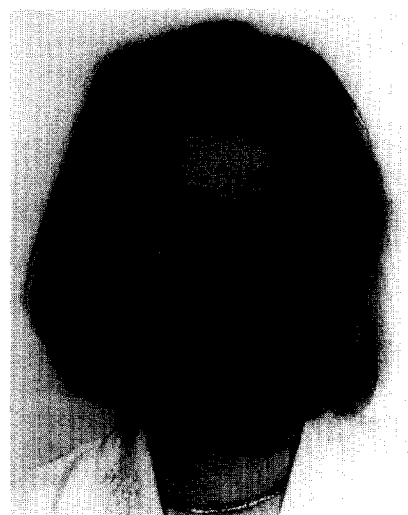
Professor Corner is also Director of the Centre for Cancer and Palliative Care Studies at the Institute of Cancer Research, in partnership with the Royal Marsden NHS Trust.

In her inaugural lecture as Professor, she pleaded for more resources to help patients cope with cancer in their daily lives.

"The focus has been on the fight for survival and not enough on the stress and suffering people with cancer experience. Too little attention has been paid to the detrimental effects of toxic or disfiguring treatments and not nearly enough has been done to help patients deal with the problems the disease brings," she said.

She identified four urgent measures to improve the situation:

- Greater investment in developing treatments that are less damaging, so that distressing side-effects such as hair loss, early menopause and sterility need no longer be accepted as the norm.
- More research to evaluate the needs and problems of people living with cancer. She highlighted two relevant projects at the Institute of Cancer Research: the very successful use of non-drug measures to alleviate breathlessness in lung cancer patients, and a study



Professor Jessica Corner: Pushing for resources to train more nurses in cancer care.

focusing on the fatigue suffered by people with advanced cancer.

- Greater collaboration between patients and doctors, so that the patient is fully involved in treatment decisions and feels more in control.
- A reconstruction of the environment of cancer care, with softer terminology that is dominated less by the risk of death and more by patients' individual needs.

In the U.K., cancer services are being reorganised in line with the Calman proposals. The above issues, she feels must feature in the restructuring if patients are to benefit fully.

She stressed the role of nurses: "The role of nurses has become increasingly vital as they provide much of the on-going support that is essential to cancer sufferers in their daily lives. It is imperative that this is acknowledged and resources are made available to train more nurses in the specialist skills required," she said.