

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 31 MARCH 2009

This year has seen the beginning of a new dawn for particle therapy in the UK. The opportunity to establish proton therapy as a treatment option for patients from the UK was offered by the National Radiotherapy Advisory Group report published in February 2007. During this year work by the National Specialised Commissioning Team (NSCT) of the NHS really progressed on a competitive bidding process between various UK radiotherapy centres to provide proton therapy on their sites. When these centres open for service in four or so years' time, a great step will have been made to replace the current option for such treatment by referral overseas which is not easy for most patients. The Trust has developed links with the principal bidding institutions.

As was indicated in last year's report, the Trust's ambitions to gain better understanding and support for other particle therapy may be afforded by this development. The Trust has strengthened its links to the particle therapy and, more widely, the clinical oncology community with a view to offering educational support. History has meant that particle therapy has been neglected in the education and training of doctors and others who will now need to know about it so that appropriate patients can be directed to treatment.

The Trust agreed to sponsor, with the Institute of Physics and the Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine, the BIR President's Conference on particle therapy held in May 2009. Our plan is use the opportunity of a sponsored training programme also to inform about carbon ion therapy, arguably, radiobiologically a more interesting therapy. The Trust has continued to maintain relevant websites to offer information on particle therapy and, separately, carbon ion therapy. There have been some encouraging developments to make carbon ion therapy facilities more affordable and there are several centres developing facilities in continental Europe. These will offer good opportunities for travelling fellows from the UK to understand both proton and carbon ion therapy.

The Trust has not lost sight of neutron therapy where the it very significantly supported a satellite meeting devoted exclusively to the use of neutrons in cancer therapy. This was held in October 2009 in parallel with an important nuclear dosimetry meeting in South Africa at the neutron therapy facility at iThemba Laboratories. This meeting opened up new collaboration with previously little-known though significant neutron therapy facilities in Russia.

From this meeting an agreement was made to develop some form of international registry of neutron patients. This is not easy but it might form a basis for publications to demonstrate, with a reasonable level of confidence, evidence of the benefit of fast neutrons in the treatment of selected diseases. This is work-in-progress. The Trust was encouraged by a recent comment:

"At a previous center, one of our radiation oncologists learned his daughter had salivary gland cancer. He did all the due diligence. She could have gone anywhere. Finally he sent her to Seattle for neutrons. He later told me it was the right decision."

Scott Dube, MS DABR
Medical Physicist
Queen of the Valley Medical Center Napa, CA

The Trust was pleased to welcome a number of key figures from the UK oncology community to its March 2010 Trustees' Meeting to help form policies for the future.

Risk assessment

The Trustees regularly keep under review an assessment of the risks both financial and otherwise and take steps to ensure that they are properly controlled.

Reserves policy

The Trustees recognise that their support of Fellowships and other activities continue to deplete the Trust's capital. This is a deliberate decision and the effect it will have upon future income is well recognised. The Trustees continue to ensure that funds are maintained at a level to meet the present and future commitments of the charity.