I recently had the privilege of attending the EONS 30th Anniversary event in the Royal Marsden Hospital in London on 10 April 2014. It was an appropriate setting for the event, as it was the place where it all began some 30 years previously in 1984. The day was a day that looked back and celebrated the achievements of the past members. It was also a day to look at where we are at the present time and where we see the organisation in the future.

The day was divided into two sessions: morning and afternoon. The morning session was chaired by Paul Trevatt, who welcomed everybody to the event.

The first speaker of the morning session was the current President of EONS, Erik van Muilekom. He set the scene for the day by looking back at when it all started and how things have progressed over the years. Despite the changes the organisation has seen, Erik believes the core message and values that were established in 1984 are still relevant today:

- Time and energy from volunteers
- Working together
- Compassion
- Wish to improve cancer CARE

He also acknowledged how the Society continues to grow and there are now 22,000 members from 30 countries.

The next speakers that presented on the day were former EONS award winners. Three different presentations were given by three former winners and it was clear from each presentation that were it not for the grants that were given by EONS, their research would not have been possible and their improvements to cancer nursing care would not have occurred.

There was a very moving presentation from a patient, Prof. Ania Willman. She is current President of the Swedish Nursing Society of Nursing. She focused on her experience of being a patient being treated for Lymphoma. Her focus was very much on her surroundings when she was in hospital and how it can negatively impact on patients when they are confined to a small room. Ania expressed the struggles and challenges that patients experience when they are being treated for cancer.

Shelley Dolan, currently Chief Nurse at the Royal Marsden Hospital, gave a very upbeat and positive account of cancer nursing. She started by looking back at how the Royal Marsden started and how EONS had its first home in the Royal Marsden. She looked at all the developments that have taken place since the inception of EONS and particularly how the Royal Marsden has changed through the years and how it has grown. She also took a moment to reflect on the great work of Robert
Tiffany, who was the first President of EONS. His name was mentioned a number of times during the day. His legacy had an impact on many nurses and their careers. In her concluding remarks Shelley said that she would like to work with EONS in establishing a partnership between the Royal Marsden and EONS to give staff the opportunity to study in the Royal Marsden and across Europe.

The afternoon session was chaired by Professor Mary Wells. It started with 11 former Presidents being interviewed by Nicholas Owen. Each Past President was asked about their thoughts on how they think EONS has changed over the years. Ireland was well represented by Kathy Redmond.

This session was followed by presentations from two EONS National Societies, Slovenia and Cyprus, about their experience of setting up a new organisation to promote cancer nursing.

The final speaker was EONS President-Elect, Professor Daniel Kelly. His focus was on looking to the future and what the challenges may be. He felt that this could be best summed up by:

- Balancing the organisation’s needs and the membership expectations
- Harnessing expertise and collaborations
- Communication and engagement
- Recognising volunteerism
- Build on legacy- we are creating the future today!

Professor Mary Wells concluded the day with a thank you to all who attended.

On the day there was a poster presentation and the IANO was well represented with a poster from our President Eileen O’Donovan.

I found the day to be very upbeat and enriching. While looking back at all the great work that has been done, there are many challenges in an ever-changing health care system both here and across the world. EONS has been part of cancer nursing for the past 30 years and because of all the great cancer nurses who are striving to continuously improve nursing care across Europe, its future is secure for another 30 years.