

EONS Research Workshop

On June 15-17 2011 we held our first EONS Research Workshop “From Clinical Problem to Research Proposal” at the Royal Marsden Hospital, London.

Eleven participants from across Europe were selected on the basis of a short application and CV. Each applicant was expected to prepare an outline of a clinical topic or problem of their own choosing, showing why it was an important research area. In addition, they were asked to nominate an experienced research mentor, who had agreed to work with them on the development of their research proposal.

Facilitated by three members of the EONS Board – Danny Kelly, Ulrika Ostlund and Mary Wells – participants shared and developed their research ideas over 3 intensive but very enjoyable days.

The aims of the workshop were to develop skills, strategies, knowledge and confidence in:

1. Refining a research question
2. Selecting appropriate methodological approaches
3. Realising a research plan

The participants brought with them some fantastic research ideas, covering a range of diverse topics including adherence to oral cancer agents; hope in end of life care; the experience of 23 hour breast surgery; the needs and experiences of nurses caring for dying patients; delay in head and neck cancer diagnosis; models of metastatic breast cancer care, tacit knowledge for nursing assessment, psycho-educational interventions for fatigue, radiation skin reaction assessment, palliative home care and comprehensive geriatric assessment. Using these ideas as a basis for our work, we utilised a combination of presentations, discussions and small working groups to explore some of the practical and theoretical aspects of writing a research proposal, applying for research funding and carrying out a research project.

It wasn't all work though! On the first evening, we had a meal together and got to know more about life and cancer nursing in all our respective countries (UK, Italy, Slovenia, Greece, Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Ireland and Sweden). Participants enjoyed the experience of being in one of the most attractive parts of central London and had the second evening free to shop, eat, drink and sample the nightlife on offer!

On the last morning, we met three inspirational cancer nurses from the Royal Marsden – Theresa Wiseman, Natalie Doyle and Natalie Pattison – who told us how they had combined clinical practice and research in their own careers and how their research had influenced practice.

The workshop was challenging and hard work but we also laughed a lot and learned a great deal from each other. Our research ideas developed, became more realistic, and in some cases changed. We came away with a range of strategies, questions and plans to discuss with nominated mentors, who will receive a small mentoring fee from EONS to enable them to support participants to continue working on their proposals.

We have established the foundations for some very good friendships, research collaborations and networks and we are really looking forward to seeing how all the participants progress their research

ideas over the next few months and into the future. Evaluation forms suggest that the EONS Research Workshop has achieved one of the core aspects of our CARE strategy – to help oncology nurses to **REALISE THEIR POTENTIAL**. Comments from participants included: -

“I have been so lucky and happy to be involved in this workshop. It has been inspiring, motivating, useful. One of the best achievements was the contacts we made and interaction with people from around Europe”

“Every day I learned something....it really opened my eyes on the themes of my research proposal that I hadn't realised before”

“Very empowering! The outline and structure was brilliant”

“This workshop has left me feeling motivated to undertake my research project”

“I am leaving very inspired”

“Probably some of the most significant days of my life. So many brilliant ideas, so many bright people from all over Europe, so great instructors! Thank you!”

We came away with some useful feedback on how we might improve future workshops, including more time for small group work and practical sessions using databases and working out research costs. This may mean extending the duration of the workshop of course!

From the perspective of the facilitators, it was a real privilege to spend time with such a motivated and committed group of cancer nurses and we also left London feeling really inspired. Thank you to all who took part. We hope that we have now started a new EONS tradition!

Mary Wells