

PATIENTS FROM BIRMINGHAM NOW ABLE TO DONATE SAMPLES TO NATIONAL CANCER TISSUE BANK

onCore UK, a national 'biobank' set up to house and supply samples of cancer patients' tissue for research, today (Sunday) announced at the National Cancer Research Institute Conference in Birmingham it is accepting sample donations from University Hospital Birmingham.

Cancer patients in Birmingham can now opt to donate samples of their tumour and blood to the bank. In the future, scientists will be able to apply to use these samples to understand more about cancer and to develop new treatments and cures for the disease.

Healthcare professionals will give full information to patients before they formally agree to donate by signing a consent form. People who want to donate can be confident that their sample will be taken and stored to the highest standards, in line with the law and ethical requirements*. Donations will be linked to information about the patient's medical history but researchers will not have access to donors' identities.

Funded by Cancer Research UK, the Department of Health and the Medical Research Council, onCore UK's world-class archive will help meet the growing need for tissue samples from cancer patients. onCore UK will continue to work in collaboration with other tissue banks in the UK to integrate and improve access to the many archives already in existence.

The national bank will provide a secure route for cancer patients to actively contribute to cancer research and help people who have the disease in the future.

Anne Carter, head of operations for onCore UK, said: "onCore UK was set up both to help facilitate cancer research in the UK and to meet the desire expressed by people with cancer to help. Many patients want to do something to support research into their disease and to help others in the future.

"onCore UK can help people with cancer do this by providing them with an accessible and ethically approved way of donating samples and data. And they can do this safe in the knowledge that their donation will be stored securely and made available quickly to researchers throughout the country who can demonstrate how the samples can help their research."

Cancer survivor and Sarcoma UK director Roger Wilson from Ludlow, Shropshire, said: "Knowing your tumour has been removed by surgery is a great boost when you have cancer. Now patients can easily donate their tumour for research and because of onCore UK's national tissue bank we can be confident that our donations will be used by the best scientists in the best and most ethical way."

At present it is difficult to answer some of the most pressing research questions using samples from a single bank, as the number of samples is too small. This is especially the case where rare cancers are concerned. And different banks may also use different methods to prepare and preserve material, affecting consistency when scientists use samples from multiple sources.

Dr Neil Steven, consultant in medical oncology and clinical lead for the Pan Birmingham Cancer Research Network which is facilitating local NHS Trusts to co-ordinate tissue sample donations, said: "We're delighted to have established this partnership with onCore UK which we hope will greatly benefit cancer patients in Birmingham. Patients want to fight cancer and donating tissue for high quality research is one way to do it."

Professor Herbie Newell, director of translational research at Cancer Research UK, said: "Samples of tissue and body fluids from patients are fast becoming the cornerstone of cancer research. Analysing them helps us unravel how and why cells become cancerous. They play a vital and increasingly important role in the development and testing of new treatments for the disease.

"Archives like this are crucial in the fight against cancer. Enabling scientists to access the high quality samples they need will help speed the pace of research into cancer in the UK."



Notes to Editor

- * onCore UK will comply with all applicable regulation in the UK including:
- the Human Tissue Act 2004 and the regulations subsidiary to this Act
- the Codes of Practice issued by the Human Tissue Authority
- the Health and Social Care Act 2003
- the Data Protection Act 1998

Further details about Roger Wilson's story are available on request.

onCore UK is a recently formed charitable company founded through a collaborative funding partnership with the Department of Health (England), the Medical Research Council (MRC) and Cancer Research UK (CRUK). Along with its partners in the NHS, its role is to act as an honest broker of donated samples: to source, process, and protect donated samples and ensure their high quality so that cancer researchers can use them.

onCore UK has already established partnerships with the Central South Coast Cancer Research Network, for sample donations in the Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust and Southampton University Hospitals NHS Trust.

About the NCRI Cancer Conference

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Conference is the UK's premier forum for disseminating advances across all aspects of cancer research.

AstraZeneca is the gold sponsor for the NCRI Cancer Conference 2007.

About the NCRI

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) was established in April 2001. It is a partnership between government, the voluntary sector and the private sector, with the primary mission of maximising patient benefit that accrues from cancer research in the UK through coordination of effort and joint planning towards an integrated national strategy for cancer research. www.ncri.org.uk

The NCRI consists of: The Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI); The Association for International Cancer Research; The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council; Breakthrough Breast Cancer; Breast Cancer Campaign; Cancer Research UK; Department of Health; Economic and Social Research Council; Leukaemia Research Fund; Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research; Macmillan Cancer Support; Marie Curie Cancer Care; The Medical Research Council; Northern Ireland Health and Personal Social Services Research & Development Office; Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation; Scottish Executive Health Department; Tenovus; Wales Office of Research and Development for Health & Social Care; Wellcome Trust; and Yorkshire Cancer Research.

