



The Clatterbridge
Cancer Charity



DONOR UPDATE

SUMMER 2022

Cancer survival figures have doubled in the past 40 years and in almost every type of the disease this is due to research. The never ending quest to find cancer earlier, diagnose with more precision and find new treatments is one which plays out across the globe. The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre has its role to play in this progress – bringing together experts to make those bold next steps to improve treatments; and it's your support for our Charity that is often crucial to funding this progress.

Modern day cancer research is extremely complex and multi-disciplinary, but at its heart remains the people – those brilliant doctors and scientists who put their expertise together to ask the questions nobody else has yet asked.

Here we would like to introduce you to two such people – Clatterbridge's newly appointed Director of Clinical Research, Professor Christian Ottensmeier, and Dr Jim Parry – a senior trainee who has recently undertaken his first steps into the world of laboratory based cancer research.

Christian is a world expert on immunotherapy with a dazzling scientific career including research collaborations with labs around the world:

“My research is all about harnessing the power of the body's own immune system to attack the cancer cells. Immunotherapy is very new and very exciting – with the genuine power to cure patients with even advanced cancer. However we have much to do to offer benefit to more people, so I was very excited for this opportunity to relocate my academic team and my clinical practice to Liverpool and The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre.”

“This is a wonderful time to be joining the research team up here, and I feel truly honoured to be in the position of Director of Clinical Research. I am so excited about what we can build for our other areas of strength – blood cancers, pancreatic and gastro cancers, lung cancer, head and neck cancer - there is so much we can do.”





Whilst the opportunities are huge, so too can be the challenges. COVID-19 has delayed so much in the research world but it also brings a long term effect by constricting funding schemes across the country.

"Winning funding was always a challenge" says Christian "but it's now harder than ever; a pharmaceutical company might be willing to fund a project with obvious benefit for them but what about the discovery science? And one of my biggest concerns remains the training and development of new research talent - we need to do all that we can to ensure that a scientific career is open and appealing to those doctors who have an interest in research, otherwise I will never get to retire!"

Thankfully the Charity has committed to helping in this effort by agreeing to fund a number of research initiatives, including the costs of helping young doctors to take the first step towards a research career by conducting a PhD. The next such beneficiary is Dr Jim Parry:

"I have worked as a doctor at Clatterbridge for five

years, with a particular interest in lung cancer, but had never before had the opportunity to commit to doing a PhD until I worked with Christian, who will be supervising my research over the next three years."

"Our immune system is a vital part of our defence against cancer. Like Christian said, the science of immunotherapy is very young and there is still so much to be understood. The only way to do that is to ask new questions and explore new boundaries."

"I will be analysing the immune cells of Clatterbridge patients at a level of detail which has not been done thus far, to understand how different cancers and treatments interact with those cells. This will help us to design better therapies in the future – making them more effective or less toxic. It might also help us to understand which people will respond well to immunotherapy and which may not – an absolutely crucial decision for us to make."

"I am so grateful to have this opportunity and must thank the donors to The Clatterbridge Cancer Charity – it is an absolute privilege to be undertaking some research which will help to improve someone's treatment in years to come – as a doctor, is there anything better?"

"Jim is absolutely right" says Christian "and this PhD will make him not only a researcher of the future but it will make him a better doctor. It is so crucial that we invest in our young talent so that they can build on our science just as I have built on the science which has gone before me."

"We at The Clatterbridge Cancer Charity are delighted to be helping to fund Dr Parry's PhD research and the benefits it will bring.

We look forward to working closely with our clinical research colleagues in the coming years to provide a reliable and constant source of funding to bring the latest scientific advancements to patients."

Katrina Bury, Head of Charity



Investing in Innovation

The Bright Ideas Fund

The thought that money donated today could help a patient tomorrow, is a real driving force for why many people support us.

It's these kind gifts that help us to look to the future, with innovation and enterprise playing an important role in The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre's five-year Trust Strategy.

We know our Clatterbridge staff and volunteers are full of bright ideas, so, backed by a £150,000 pledge of Charity funding, The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre recently began calling on individuals or teams, staff or volunteers, to share ideas - big or small - that improve our care.

Here we meet Dr Seamus Coyle, a Consultant in Palliative Care, who was amongst the first staff members to receive funding when he submitted his idea for trialling massage guns to help patients with their pain.

Firstly Seamus could you please talk us through the background to your idea?

Sure. To start with you need to understand that 25% of cancer patients suffer from severe pain and it can happen across any area of the body. The effect of this on the patient cannot be underestimated – it can have a huge effect on them psychologically, preventing them from doing things they love and acting as a constant reminder that they have cancer. As a doctor we can prescribe pain killers such as morphine but that doesn't always work and it is not a suitable long term solution.

And so you started to think of other ways to treat these patients?

Yes absolutely. I am a trained acupuncturist and so I have used this with some patients but it isn't ideal. I myself started to get aches and pains from exercise, and a friend of mine recommended that I buy a massage gun – they look a bit like a hairdryer but with a padded ball attached to offer varied degrees of pummelling!



I realised that my back ache was actually related to tightness in my leg. The massage gun released that strain and relieved the pain. I then started to suggest that patients use them if suffering from what seemed to be muscular aches and many responded really well.

Tell us about your application to the Bright Ideas Fund

Each massage gun costs around £50, which is quite costly for many people. Also I wanted a supply of these machines which we could use with inpatients and hence I applied for £1,000 of funding to buy 20 new massage guns. The application was accepted and we now have them in the clinic to loan to patients, thanks to donations to The Charity.

Are they proving popular?

Yes – they are popular and they are working! For me these are perfect not just because they are effective but because they allow a patient to feel in control of their pain in a way they wouldn't if we were using drugs, which need prescribing and come with side effects and limitations on use.

Patients can pick up their massage gun any time they want and that makes a massive difference – to offer ownership of their treatment at a time when so much of their health is out of their hands.

Charity funds vital chemotherapy services

After funding a £25,000 investment into Clatterbridge's Chemo in the Community programme in 2021, The Charity is delighted this year to be improving patient care further within our chemotherapy clinics through the provision of additional Scalp Cooling machines which help to limit hair loss in patients.

In many cases hair loss is the first visible side effect for patients during treatment and can be one of the most profound – a sudden and obvious sign to themselves and those around them that a person is undergoing cancer treatment.

Now, thanks to your donations, this isn't the case for those patients who wish to try and keep their hair. The effectiveness of special machines which can prevent hair loss by cooling the scalp during treatment has improved greatly in recent years and we at Clatterbridge are committed to ensuring that this treatment option is available to as many of our patients as we can.

A scalp cooling machine is a special hat worn before, during and after chemotherapy treatment to cool the scalp and thereby reduce the bloodflow in this area by up to 80%. This in turn reduces the level of chemotherapy agent which reaches the scalp and this is what helps to limit damage to the hair follicles.

There has been a rapid increase in the demand for these fantastic machines in clinics over recent years, especially amongst breast cancer patients – for whom they are often very effective. The Clatterbridge Cancer Charity is now committed to funding a number of additional machines which will be placed into our clinics across the region in the coming months.

These machines, each costing around £12,000, will make a huge difference to our patients – increasing confidence, self-esteem and helping them to feel more in control of their treatments. They are not widely available through many NHS services so we are especially pleased to be providing them to Clatterbridge patients.

The incredible Lauren Upshall hit the headlines recently with her incredible fundraising efforts, raising enough cash for two Scalp Cooler machines in a matter of weeks after experiencing their benefits for herself!

"I was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 36. It was a total shock, we had only just got married and were starting to plan our future together.

When my treatment began, I was lucky to be offered the use of a Scalp Cooler machine. Working in the beauty industry I have always appreciated how important it can be to an individual's self esteem to look good, but for cancer patients this can so easily be taken away in a matter of weeks.

These magical machines will make a huge difference for patients like me in the future - helping us to feel more normal and like ourselves at a time when we need our identity the most."

Lauren Upshall, Clatterbridge Patient



As always we thank you for your continued support of our work – if you would like to direct your current or future donations specifically to areas such as the provision of Scalp Coolers, the Research Fund or Bright Ideas Fund then please do contact Paul.Winter5@nhs.net