Collaboration the Key to Beating Cancer

Without innovative research, medical breakthroughs that help people live better for longer would not be possible. Moreover, finding new ways of tackling healthcare challenges increasingly depends on closer collaboration between different disciplines and between different research and funding organisations. Take the battle to beat cancer. Huge progress has been achieved in prevention, diagnosis and treatment, with Cancer Research UK (CRUK – the world’s biggest fundraising medical research charity) right at the forefront with its long-term support for pioneering work by the UK’s world-class research base. But more needs to be done, with greater collaboration a crucial component.

CRUK’s new Strategic Partnership with the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) is adding momentum to the process. For both organisations, commitment to invest in, foster and harness outstanding UK expertise goes to the heart of their mission. Now, by co-funding collaborative multidisciplinary research that brings together their expert networks in universities and beyond, their partnership is giving real impetus to the drive to beat cancer.

A Fresh Dimension to Inspiring Innovation

The Multidisciplinary Projects Award Scheme is the partnership’s key vehicle for catalysing advances that change and save lives. Initiated by CRUK in 2014, EPSRC came on board in 2015 to co-fund relevant research – boosting overall funding to £37.5m over 5 years. Joint support has already been awarded to 10 projects, including an Institute of Cancer Research/University College London collaboration on automated image processing and treatment planning for real-time MRI-guided radiation therapy.

“The partnership with EPSRC enables us to reach out to engineering and the physical sciences and attract new types of thinking into cancer research”, says Jamie Meredith, CRUK’s Head of Discovery Research Funding. “It gives us an unparalleled opportunity to develop new methodologies and technologies to understand, detect and treat cancer.”
At the Centre of Advances in Imaging

Imaging plays a vital role in cancer diagnosis, prognosis and treatment. Generating novel technologies is a multidisciplinary challenge where radiologists, biologists, chemists, engineers and other specialists all make distinctive contributions. The aim of the CRUK/EPSRC Cancer Imaging Centre in Oxford – one of a number funded by the partnership that work closely together – is to support and integrate expertise spanning Oxford University Hospital Foundation Trusts and university departments to deliver such technologies.

Dr Michael Youdell, Interim Project Manager, comments: “Having both CRUK and EPSRC on board is critical to our ability to harness engineering and physical sciences in clinically relevant ways.”

Our partnership with EPSRC is facilitating significant progress that could not be achieved by either organisation alone. Together, we’re pushing the boundaries to enable innovative collaborations that will really help drive cancer research forwards so that we can benefit more patients sooner.

Dr Ian Walker, Director of Clinical Research and Strategic Partnerships, Cancer Research UK

CRUK

- Cancer Research UK is the world’s leading cancer charity dedicated to saving lives through research
- Cancer Research UK supports research into all aspects of cancer through the work of over 4,000 scientists, doctors and nurses
- Cancer Research UK’s Strategic Partnerships team act as a key point of contact for the charity’s partners from across the public, private and not for profit sectors
- Cancer Research UK has been at the heart of the progress that has already seen survival rates in the UK double in the last forty years
- Together with its partners and supporters, Cancer Research UK’s vision is to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured

EPSRC

- EPSRC invests around £800 million a year in a broad range of subjects – from mathematics to materials science, and from information technology to structural engineering
- EPSRC currently has Strategic Partnerships with 19 organisations, including four in the healthcare sector
- In March 2015, EPSRC published a new healthcare strategy designed to accelerate the translation of EPSRC research into healthcare applications
- EPSRC funding support for healthcare technologies currently totals £338.2 million, comprising 308 grants in total