Visiting Fellow: Dr Laurien Buffart

Institution: EMGO Institute for Health and Care Research, VU University Medical Center, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Amsterdam
Visiting Period: 1 Oct – 5 December 2012

Overview

The principal research opportunity was to progress the aims of the Polaris project and during this visit we completed all of ECU’s commitments as a collaborator. This involved working with Dr Buffart to format the data in our datasets for import into the Polaris project. We also completed the codebook for all variables. We believe this to be a strong opportunity to showcase the CRN in Exercise Medicine and build collaborations with ECU and our CRN Partners. This will not only showcase our research output and capacity to the international community but also lead to high impact publications including position stands. Because this project is the first to collate all current knowledge and data on exercise and cancer the outcomes will be of high importance and international interest for informing best practice. Combined with the reputation of the partners involved we expect very high impact outputs such as position stands which traditionally result in very high citation rates. It is therefore very important for our team to contribute to this project, work closely with Dr Buffart, and solidify our position on the writing teams. This Visiting Research Fellowship and collaboration directly advantaged the following staff: Prof Robert Newton, Prof Daniel Galvao, Dr Prue Cormie, Dr Michael Baker, Dr Carolyn McIntyre, Dr Anthony Gunnell. A minimum of six Ph.D. students who are currently working in the field of exercise oncology, four research assistants, and three exercise physiologists currently working in the ECU Health and Wellness Institute with all of the had the opportunity to learn and collaborate with Dr Buffart.

Benefit was also be derived by the School of Exercise and Health Sciences and the ECU Health and Wellness Institute with insights into exercise oncology as well as research funding opportunities in the European Union. Dr Buffart provided a research seminar for staff and students on exercise and cancer research and practice in Europe. Dr Buffart also attended the 4th International Congress on Physical Activity and Public Health in Sydney, Australia from 31st October – 3rd November 2012. She met with Professor Maria Fiatarone-Singh and her team which comprise the University of Sydney partner in our CRN.

Aims

The first aim of this visit was to work with Dr Buffart to complete our tasks under the Polaris project which was to compile all of our research studies in exercise and cancer for Dr Buffart to complete a meta analysis for inclusion in the Polaris database. This was completed successfully. As this project involves all of the most notable research teams in exercise and cancer in the world we expect a substantial number of high impact publications to result.
Our second aim was to plan and prepare a research grant application to be jointly submitted to the Dutch Cancer Society and other European Union funding agencies as appropriate. Part of this aim was for Dr Buffart to provide expert input on research grant opportunities in Europe for 2013. We believe this is an excellent opportunity for ECU and the CRN Partners to access international research funding but we require a European to provide advice and also to be a co-investigator with others in her team if we are to access European Union funding. Dr Buffart worked closely with our RDO, Regis Williams and our CRN now has a much better understanding of research grant opportunities in the European Union.

The third aim was for Dr Buffart to provide lectures and seminars for ECU and CRN Partners on the topic of exercise for the prevention and management of cancer. This was completed and feedback was very positive from the participants.

The fourth aim was to produce at least two research papers for submission to high impact factor journals. Three papers were actually written and submitted for review:

1) Evidence-based physical activity guidelines for cancer survivors: current guidelines, knowledge gaps and future research directions. *Cancer Treatment Reviews*, currently being revised after the first review which was quite positive.

2) Mediators of the resistance and aerobic exercise intervention effect on physical and general health in men undergoing androgen deprivation therapy for prostate cancer. *Cancer*, currently being revised after the first review which was quite positive.

3) Predicting Optimal Cancer Rehabilitation and Supportive care (POLARIS); Rationale and design for meta-analyses of individual patient data of randomised controlled trials evaluating the effect of exercise and psychosocial interventions on quality of life in cancer patients and survivors. *BMC Cancer*, Submitted April 2013.