

## CTRad bulletin

### Centres of Excellence in Academic Radiation Oncology Think Tank meeting, February 2017

- CTRad's Centres of Excellence in Academic Radiation Oncology exercise entered an important phase when a face-to-face Think Tank meeting was organised in partnership with the Royal College of Radiologists, to which all centres that participated in the exercise were invited to attend. The aims of the meeting were to share outcomes of the exercise, gauge progress at the national level and discuss how the UK radiotherapy (RT) research community can work together, providing mutual support, to make continuing progress.

#### Background

- Participating centres initially undertook self-assessment for the years 2009 and 2015 in each of five domains: level of support from the relevant Cancer Centre and higher education institution, and four research domains: clinical trials, technical RT, radiation biology and RT-related imaging. Each centre was asked to provide supporting evidence according to a set of criteria established by CTRad, such as information on clinical trials, relevant publications and details of personnel.
- A panel of two international experts and CTRad academic clinical oncologists, physicist, radiation biologist and consumer then assessed the submissions and verified or modified the self-assessment categories. After three phases of data collection, individual outcomes were shared with each of the participating centres. CTRad is very grateful to the international reviewers, Prof Philippe Lambin (Maastricht) and Prof Uulke van der Heide (NKI, Amsterdam), for their time, advice and active participation in the reviewing process.

#### Day of the meeting

- David Sebag-Montefiore (Deputy Chair) opened the meeting with an overview of the exercise, and Neil Burnet (Ex-officio) described the broader background to the work which started with the first Academic Think Tank in 2010, was developed during two subsequent meetings in 2011 and 2013, and paved the way for Think Tanks in additional professional groups including medical physics (2011) and radiographers (2013, 2014, 2016) to support their academic research development. These meetings formed the building blocks of the current exercise.
- Anthony Chalmers (Chair) then described the full process of the exercise which started with developing the criteria back in 2014 and proceeded through data collection and assessment phases in 2015 and 2016. He then presented headline results from 2009 and 2015 highlighting progress made throughout the UK: in all centres there has been clear progress in most of the five domains; in the clinical trials domain five centres were rated 'Internationally Competitive' and nine as 'Nationally Competitive', reflecting the UK's strengths in this area. In the technical RT and RT-related imaging domains there have been encouraging trends although the improvements were less prominent than in the other domains.
- Helen Bulbeck (WS1) laid out the why (policy statement), what (strategy) & how (consultation, collaboration & user-led) of involving patients for future exercises. Three participating centres, Belfast, Cambridge & Manchester, then presented their experience of going through the exercise, including the benefits, challenges & impact of the results on their future strategy & plans.
- The afternoon saw an open discussion facilitated by Phil Evans (WS4) and Adrian Crellin (Ex-officio); one of the key topics was how the clinical service might be assessed more effectively. Anthony and David acknowledged that there are different quality metrics in advanced RT, and data pertaining to this area will need to be collected from different sources; they agreed that discussion should start with Public Health England to establish the types and quality of data

available. There was also extensive discussion on the scope and characteristics of high impact publications relevant to clinical radiotherapy research, and this will need to be explored further before the next exercise. Delegates thought future exercises should also include evidence of networking and collaboration, and some of the other criteria will require refinement.

- Overall, attendees agreed there was major improvement in RT research in the UK between 2009 and 2015, of which the insights provided by previous Think Tanks played a big part in prompting investment at centres.

#### Going forward

- One of the international reviewers expressed interest in contributing to the benchmarking exercise as an external participant; CTRad is thus exploring the option of including non-UK centres in future iterations of the exercise.
- CTRad is delighted with the level of engagement of the participating centres, and is optimistic that the process and the information generated will be of value to individual centres and the UK radiation oncology community as a whole. A publication is being considered and will be posted on the CTRad website once published.

#### **CTRad UK strategy for internal mammary chain radiotherapy research meeting, December 2016**

- Charlotte Coles (WS3) and John Yarnold (Institute of Cancer Research) organised a meeting to discuss a UK strategy for internal mammary chain (IMC) radiotherapy research meeting, attended by a multidisciplinary group of 30 delegates including clinicians, trialists, methodologists, patient advocates and physicists, which also included representatives from the two NHS proton beam therapy (PBT) centres.
- To set the scene, plenary speakers presented benefits and risks of IMC RT, the need for IMC RT in the UK, background to the UK PBT service, and challenges for current IMC RT research from both the patient's and methodology's points of view. Several speakers then presented on UK IMC RT study proposals & current overseas IMC RT trials, and the group discussed which studies should be supported as part of the UK strategy. For supported studies, there was discussion on how the trial design of these studies should be refined, a collaborative working framework and funding.
- Delegates decided the two overseas studies presented would not be supported at this point because either there was considerable overlap with current UK trials, or that some of the trial components were not the most suitable for the UK patient population.
- The group agreed that a collaborative UK breast IMC proton study should be developed and a further meeting will be arranged in due course.
- You can read a summary of the meeting on the CTRad website under 2016:  
[ctrad.ncri.org.uk/resources/reports-and-tumour-site-reviews](http://ctrad.ncri.org.uk/resources/reports-and-tumour-site-reviews)

#### **Calling for radiotherapy proposal ideas for the June 2017 proposals guidance meeting**

- CTRad is calling for radiotherapy proposal ideas to be presented for feedback from CTRad members at the next proposals guidance meeting on 7 June 2017 in London. Deadline for submission of proposal ideas is **4pm on Wednesday 19 April 2017**. To submit proposal ideas, please fill in the template which can be downloaded from the CTRad website:  
[ctrad.ncri.org.uk/research-support/proposals-guidance-meetings](http://ctrad.ncri.org.uk/research-support/proposals-guidance-meetings)

#### **Contact us**

If you have any feedback, news you want to share, or want to find out more about topics mentioned above, please contact the CTRad Team ([CTRad@ncri.org.uk](mailto:CTRad@ncri.org.uk)). You can also browse the CTRad web pages [ctrad.ncri.org.uk](http://ctrad.ncri.org.uk) for more information and future dates of CTRad events, or tweet about your research using hashtag #NCRI\_CTRad and NCRI handle @NCRI\_partners .

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