



# British Neuro-oncology Society Newsletter

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## Highlights from BNOS 2011 - Cambridge



together by a section of short charity presentations from the Samantha Dickson Brain Tumour Trust, Brain Tumour Research, Brain Tumour UK and the Joseph Foote Trust. A particularly stirring talk from Professor David Walker entitled “Improving the Early Detection of Brain Tumours in Children and Young People” surely left every scientist itching to get back to the bench.

The quick-fire 5 minute oral poster presentation sessions were an excellent way for investigators to disseminate an overview of their early stage work to an audience not always familiar with the techniques and/or practices. The blend of science and clinical kept these sessions innovative and ensured that there was plenty of discussion to be had over both evenings entertainment which included a summer BBQ complete with the obligatory Pimms in the stunning Homerton College gardens and a black tie gala dinner in a scene reminiscent of Hogwarts.

From the perspective of a young investigator, I always look forward to the annual BNOS meeting. Discussions with every kind of delegate from surgeons, other scientists, students, charity representatives and company reps leave me enthused with fresh ideas and motivation. I am incredibly excited about the new initiative for a young scientists and trainee forum which I hope will provide career development support, education and networking opportunities for other young investigators not only at next years meeting in Manchester but throughout the year.

## Report by a young scientist

By Dr Suzanne Birks (Post graduate forum rep – Portsmouth)



This year marked the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of BNOS and thus it was fitting that it was held in beautiful Cambridge, famed for momentous occasions and outstanding original research.

We witnessed a dynamic programme ranging from the latest initiatives in clinical trials

to new concepts in basic science all tied cohesively

## Report by local ANON member

By Ingela Oberg (Cambridge)



This year's BNOS welcomed a record number of delegates to the beautiful and serene surroundings of Homerton College, Cambridge. The 3-day programme provided an overview of how neuro-oncology services can not only individualise therapies for our patients, but also move forward with new advances and techniques enabling us to target heterogeneity within our centres. The fantastic weather teamed with fresh British strawberries, PIMMS

and a BBQ, was a fantastic way to kick-start the conference!

Opening the conference with an emotive speech was Dr Mary Archer, Addenbrookes Chairman and Non-executive Director. The main lecture-theatre housed the vast array of presentations, with lunches / refreshments served in the nearby Marquee, where our sponsors had their stands alongside the poster presentations - allowing for a relaxed forum for networking.

A new introduction this year saw brain tumour charities reach out to the wider neuro-oncology audience by voicing their individual strengths and priorities. As a result, new collaborative workings emerged, proving that heterogeneity for our patient's benefit also stretches to the charitable setting - surely a very welcome move! This theme also carried through to ANON, which has for the first time secured long-term funding from [Brainstrust](#) as a separate entity.

ANON sessions were once again well attended with 23 nurses present. Presentations included Dawn Barrick-Cook and Louise Smith from the East Anglian Cancer Network talk about information prescriptions and moving on programmes. Richella Ryan, clinical fellow in palliative care provided a comprehensive literature review of steroid use in glioma patients, asking the question if we were using too much of a good thing.

The AGM led by Louise Baker saw heartfelt discussions regarding ANON membership fees; collaborative workings with Brainstrust and how we would like to increase the profile of ANON nurses. As such we would like to welcome Professor Geoff Pilkington as incoming BNOS president. We look forward to continuing to strengthen our ties both within and outside of the BNOS arena, for the benefit of all, not least our patients.

I hope to see as many of you as possible in Manchester next year - let's keep this momentum going!

### **Young Investigator Award & prize winners**

BNOS 2010 marked the launch of the Young Investigator Award, where a young person who is making an outstanding contribution in the field of British neuro-oncology, either in laboratory or clinical work, is presented with this prestigious award.

We are delighted to announce that this year's winner is Dr Ally Rooney from Edinburgh. Amongst some excellent nominations for the 2011 Young Investigator Award (sponsored by [Brain Tumour UK](#)), Dr Rooney's work in major depressive disorder in brain tumour patients stood out as the most impressive candidate. He gave an excellent presentation on "*The frequency, clinical associations and longitudinal course of Major Depressive Disorder in adults with cerebral glioma*".

Three prizes are awarded each year for oral presentations and poster. This year our congratulations

go to Dr Sandra Dunn (best oral presentation), Dr Ashirwad Merve (best oral poster presentation) and Dr Maya Sussman (best poster).

### **The Glioma Club**

**By Professor Silvia Marino (London)**

[Professor Paolo Salomoni](#) (Samantha Dickson Brain Cancer Unit at UCL) and [Professor Silvia Marino](#)



(Barts and The London School of Medicine at Queen Mary University of London) wish to announce the 2011 '[Glioma Club](#)', a symposium for researchers, clinical scientists and medical staff working on various aspects of the

origin, genetics, neuropathology, diagnosis, imaging and treatment of gliomas.

The inaugural [Symposium](#), which took place at Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry in 2010, brought together experts from UCL School of Life & Medical Sciences, UCLH, UCL-ICH, Barts and The London School of Medicine, Royal Marsden and ICR as well as other institutes in London and the South East.

The 2011 Symposium will take place at National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, London on 28 September 2011 and it will showcase research taking place in the laboratory of the participants, and two invited speakers from continental Europe, Joan Seoane, Institute of Oncology Barcelona, Spain and Monika Hegi, University of Lausanne, Switzerland.

### **BNOS Junior Postgraduate Forum for clinical trainees and junior scientists**

**By Dr Sarah Bell (Glasgow)**

The BNOS meeting in Cambridge heralded the formation of the "BNOS Junior Postgraduate Forum" aimed at promoting neuro-oncology research, education and networking amongst trainee doctors and junior scientists. The forum is a resource for doctors in training (of any specialty), undergraduates and junior scientists with an interest in neuro-oncology research.

The new committee consists of four junior members of the society supported by senior members of the BNOS council:



\* **Dr Sarah Bell** is a neuropathology trainee in Glasgow and MRC Clinical PhD Training Fellow with research interests in molecular neuro-oncology and optimising pre-clinical models of glioblastoma.

**\* Dr Suzanne Birks**

is a post-doctoral scientist at the University of Portsmouth with interests in mitochondria as a therapeutic target and the signalling pathways involved in glioma-induced immunosuppression.



**\* Dr Laura Donovan** is also a post-doctoral scientist within the University of Portsmouth with research interests in cancer stem cells, CD133 and their relationship with hypoxia in paediatric glioma patients.



**\* Dr Ally Rooney**

is a psychiatry trainee in Edinburgh with research interests in aspects of depression in patients with glioma and recipient of this year's BNOS Young Investigator Award.

The key to future developments in neuro-oncology research centres on collaborations between basic scientists and clinicians. Therefore the junior forum is aimed at promoting early integration and scientific discussion between clinical trainees and junior scientists.

Throughout the next year the newly formed committee will be involved in developing junior activities within the society. This will include a 'trainees' section and discussion forum within the society website, career support opportunities and educational events. We will also be organising a dedicated trainee/junior scientist session during the annual BNOS meeting in Manchester (June 2012)

We hope that all current BNOS members, council members and conference attendees will encourage the junior members of their departments to get involved in our activities and events.

Anyone who would like to find out more should contact the BNOS administrator or check out the new trainee section within the society website/ [BNOS Facebook page](#).

**The Bmi1/BMP Connection in Medulloblastoma Pathogenesis**  
By Dr Ashirwad Merve/Professor Silvia Marino (London)

Medulloblastoma is the commonest CNS malignancy of childhood. Despite advances in treatment, it is still associated with high mortality and morbidity. As medulloblastomas are histologically and genetically heterogeneous, a thorough understanding of the

molecular signalling pathways involved in their development will be essential for an improved clinical stratification of patients and for the design of more specifically tailored therapies.

We have recently shown that the Polycomb group gene Bmi1 modulates cellular interactions between neuronal and glial progenitors during early postnatal development of the cerebellum via repression of the BMP pathway. Molecular mechanisms regulating the normal development of the brain are known to be often deregulated in brain tumours. Indeed Bmi1 is overexpressed in a subset of medulloblastoma and its expression is essential for tumour maintenance.

We therefore set out to test the hypothesis that aberrant repression of the BMP pathway by Bmi1 plays a role in the pathogenesis of medulloblastoma.

Preliminary studies carried out by Dr. Ashirwad Merve and Prof. Silvia Marino, Blizard Institute, Barts and The London SMD, showed that the BMP pathway is activated by downregulation of Bmi1 expression in human medulloblastoma cell lines. Interestingly changes in cell adhesion properties as well as in cell migration and motility were noted upon downregulation of Bmi1 and these changes were due to deregulation of the BMP pathway.

These initial studies were generously funded by Charlie's Challenge and Ali's Dream Charities.

These preliminary data allowed Dr. Merve to successfully compete for a prestigious MRC Clinical Research Training Fellowship to continue and extend these studies.



**An audit of referral pathways for CNS imaging of common neurological conditions in children**  
By Dr Maya Sussman (Nottingham)

Brain tumours constitute a differential diagnosis for many childhood presentations, CNS imaging is essential for diagnosis or exclusion of tumour as a cause. Multiple studies have measured a longer 'Diagnostic Interval' (time from first symptom onset to diagnosis) in paediatric brain tumours as compared to other childhood cancers. Perhaps more worryingly, UK studies identified a longer diagnostic interval than other European countries. Delays in diagnosis are thought to be detrimental to disease outcome, also causing anxiety to families and patients; therefore achieving timely diagnosis should be an important goal. This audit aimed to evaluate patient's referral pathways to CNS imaging against the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) Guidelines. In doing so, it was hoped to identify sources of avoidable delay in healthcare provision.

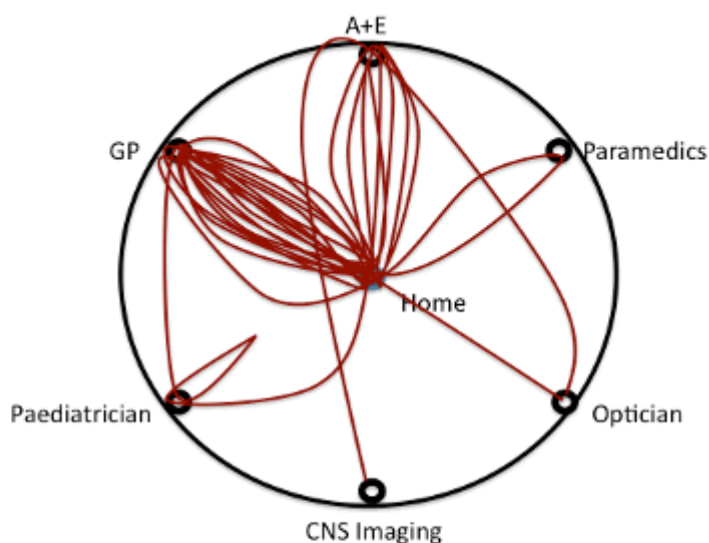
Data was collected from 41 paediatric neurology clinic patients and 11 newly diagnosed brain tumour patients in Nottingham University Hospital. A structured interview tool and case-note review were used. Compliance with referral and CNS imaging guidelines conditional on presentation of headache, vomiting, motor and seizure symptoms were assessed. Patient pathways to CNS imaging, both collectively and individually, were mapped in order to visualise unnecessary steps causing delay.

The results demonstrated tortuous routes to diagnostic CNS imaging, involving consultation with and referral

between multiple health professionals. Studying individual patient pathways emphasised the complexity of individual pathways. Compliance with guidelines was over-all poor and delay was noted in waiting times for hospital appointments and CNS imaging.

The results support the need for a national awareness campaign linked to the RCPCH guidelines. The [“HeadSmart – be brain tumour aware”](#) campaign was launched in June 2011 in the UK.

Case No.57
DOB 01/03/1993
Neuro-Oncology
<b>Handoff Statistics</b>
Discharges 10
Referrals 2
Admissions 0
Follow-up 1



**Joint NCRI/BNOS symposium**  
**10.30am-13.25pm Monday 7 November**  
**BT Convention Centre, Liverpool**

The National Cancer Research Institute is holding their 7<sup>th</sup> Cancer Conference 6 – 9 November 2011. The British Neuro-oncology Society is delighted to have teamed with the NCRI and will be holding a joint symposium on Monday 7 November 2011 10:30am – 13:25 pm which will be followed in the afternoon by a further NCRI brain tumour session.

This day is a very valuable opportunity for anyone with an interest and practice in neuro-oncology to participate in an event offering a rich programme of highly topical subjects.

Online registration deadline: **Friday 30 September 2011**. Single day rate registration is available.

Two themes will be presented during our morning symposium:

- **Biological consequences of anti-angiogenesis therapy**
- **Metastatic disease in the brain – the nature and extent of the problem**

Dr Susan Short will be hosting an afternoon session titled **“New insights into the biology and management of brain tumours”** which will include presentations from Steve Clifford and Roel Verhaak who will give updates on the impact of molecular classification in medulloblastoma and glioma respectively. Martin Taphorn will be speaking on **“Health-related quality of life in brain tumour patients”**.

[Link to Dr Short's session on "New insights into the biology and management of brain tumours"](#):

[Visit the NCRI Conference website for further information](#):

We hope you will be able to attend and benefit from what promises to be an excellent day.

## News in brief

- [BNOS welcomes new President!](#) Professor Geoff Pilkington succeeded Professor Charles Davis at this year's annual meeting.
- [Launch of South of England Brain Tumour Alliance \(SEBTA\)](#): An alliance, which brings together a number of centres in the south of England where research, diagnosis and therapy of brain tumours is active, has been launched at the University of Portsmouth.
- [Joint National Funding Call: Research Grant Round \(CwCUK/GOSH\)](#). CHILDREN with CANCER UK and Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity are making a total of £2 million available for translational research projects. Deadline for receipt of outline applications **2 November 2011**.
- [Clinical Trial Grant Round \(SDBTT/CR-UK\)](#). Download flyer from our Research page. Deadline for applications **13 April 2012**.
- [The HeadSmart: Be brain tumour aware Campaign](#) was launched 8 June 2011. This project aims to raise awareness of the symptoms of brain tumours that occur in children and young people among parents, carers, health professionals and young people themselves.



- [Nottingham Life Cycle](#): Professor David Walker is cycling 1018 miles from John O'Groats to Lands End from 27 August – 8 September 2011, raising funds to support the [Children's Brain Tumour Research Centre](#) and the [Sue Ryder Care Centre](#). He is initiating a research programme with Professor Jane Seymour, focussed on the needs of Teenagers and Young Adults requiring palliative care, as part of the new centre's strategy. David would value your support, sponsorship or participation!
- [Launch of BNOS Rare Brain and CNS Tumours Guidelines](#). We are delighted to announce the publication of a set of four new guidelines on rare tumours. This has been a joint collaboration between BNOS and the National Cancer Action Team.

- [New! Publications and Resources page](#) on BNOS website. Lists books and videos which will be of interest to clinicians and scientists. See the six short videos on *Headaches and papilloedema* to promote awareness and aid detection of brain tumours by GPs and doctors in training, produced by The Edinburgh Centre for Neuro-Oncology has produced.
- The [National Cancer Intelligence Network](#) has published details of the creation of a new national brain tumour registry on their website. "*Augmented cancer registration for CNS tumours has the potential to transform our knowledge for this group of patients.*"
- [Advance notice of BNOS 2012](#): '*Challenges and Controversies*', Manchester Conference Centre, 27 – 29 June 2012. Further information will be posted on our Annual Meeting page towards the end of the year.

## Newsletter submissions welcomed

Producing a regular newsletter is a recent BNOS initiative. We see the newsletter as an effective means of communicating widely with our members who are working in a variety of disciplines within the field of neuro-oncology and opening up networking opportunities between members. Whatever area you are working in we would love to hear from you.

Send us your content on anything that you feel would be of interest to your colleagues – report back after a conference, summarise a journal article, new technology, your own new initiatives. Articles should be no more than 250 words and will be credited to the author. Contact the newsletter editor at: [newsletter@bnos.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@bnos.org.uk).