



Newsletter

AUTUMN 2007 ISSUE 7

Welcome to our newsletter

Welcome to this edition of our newsletter. It has been an exciting time in informatics with the hosting of the inaugural joint NCRI Informatics-caBIG™ conference in London. The meeting was attended by over 150 participants and sparked lively debate on a range of issues and identified many potential areas of collaboration which are actively being taken forward, particularly in the area of medical imaging.

Turn to page 2 of this edition to read a report about the conference and to get access to links to the speaker presentations and conference slideshow. We hope to bring you updates

on the blossoming collaborations in a future issue of the newsletter.

We have also been busy re-branding the Informatics Initiative and re-designing our website based upon the community consultation we held at the end of 2006 (www.cancerinformatics.org.uk). The new website has easier navigation tools, sections dedicated to each of our stakeholder communities and a new improved version of the online Planning Matrix. We would welcome your thoughts and comments about the changes we have made, please send them through to info@cancerinformatics.org.uk.

Finally in this issue, there is a chance to find out more about the Section Head's of the Informatics Coordination Unit. In fact you can meet the Section Heads, along with the rest of the team at the NCRI Conference in Birmingham at the start of October. We hope you enjoy this issue.

Inside this issue:



NCRI Informatics & caBIG™
joint UK & US conference:
July 2007

Meet the Informatics Section Head's:



Dr. Fiona Reddington
*Fiona is Head of
Community Alliances at
the NCRI Informatics
Coordination Unit.*



Dr. Alan Hogg
*Alan is Head
of Platform
Development at the
NCRI Informatics
Coordination Unit.*

If you have any queries or comments on any article in our newsletter, or would like to contribute to the next issue, please contact us at:

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The first annual joint NCRI Informatics-caBIG™ conference took place on the 12th and 13th July at the Wellcome Trust in London.

The Wellcome Trust provided the perfect setting for this two day meeting creating an atmosphere that fostered collaboration from the first fresh brewed cup of coffee. Delegates with very diverse backgrounds but all with a common interest in making more effective use of the huge amount and diversity of cancer research data were brought together and were able to discuss some of the progress that has been made to date.

The conference was divided into five sessions covering some of the key areas of Cancer Informatics and gave both the US and the UK a platform for discussing the challenges and successes in each of the following areas:

- 21st Century Clinical Trials
- Vocabularies
- Clinical Informatics
- Tissue Banking
- E-Research Infrastructure

The conference began with an excellent Introductory Session which included formal welcome remarks from Mike Richards, Chairman of the NCRI Board,

followed by a joint Introduction from Robin Clark, Director of the NCRI Informatics Initiative, and Ken Beutow, NCI Associate Director for Bioinformatics and Information Technologies. Both very passionately and clearly put Informatics into a practical, applicable context and outlined the approaches that the UK and US are taking to ensure that we make the maximum use of Informatics to solve the ever increasing problem of having a disjointed cancer research environment. This was a great opportunity to discover what the caBIG™ project has already achieved and are endeavouring to achieve through their innovative approach, infrastructure and product suites. This session also gave delegates the chance to visualise, for the first time, the vision of the NCRI Informatics Initiative's Informatics Platform.

The Introductory Session was followed by lunch which gave attendees a chance to unwind and view the posters that were on display. The posters offered a great mix of topics from Tissue Microarrays to Training Approaches and thus catered to the interests of the diverse backgrounds of the conference attendees.

After lunch we reconvened for the afternoon sessions, first was 21st Century Clinical Trials and this was followed by the final session of the day, Vocabularies. The 21st Century Clinical Trials Session was very interesting in that it brought together the NCRI Informatics' Imaging

First Annual NCRI Informatics & caBIG™ conference, London UK



and Pathology Project with the NCI's in-vivo Imaging Workspace, each with very similar aims of improving image analysis but achieving this using different approaches. It was nice to have both perspectives on display and to get a feel for the work being carried out in both countries.

The first day ended with a Vocabularies session which truly gave a diverse perspective on encouraging the use of standard vocabularies and thereby facilitating integration. In this session we were given EBI's direction in developing The Ontology Look-up Service, which met their specific need of giving biomedical scientists a simple and convenient method for querying across controlled biomedical terminology. We also heard from cancerGRID who gave an overview of their efforts at achieving semantic integration in the Clinical Trials domain and caBIG™ covered their efforts on achieving semantic and syntactic interoperability in all domains of cancer research. This session was useful in highlighting the steps that have been taken in different research domains to ensure consistency in describing data.

The second day of the conference began with the Clinical Informatics session that looked at the work that has been carried out in the UK to manage and make more effective use of health and social data and also highlighted the importance and power of secondary uses of this data.

This was effectively demonstrated by the work of the NHS's Secondary Uses Service (SUS), Wales' Health Informatics Research Unit (HIRU) and the Northwest Institute for Bio-health Informatics (NIBHI). Following on from the theme of Clinical Informatics the subsequent session centred on Tissue Banking and consisted of talks from caBIG™ and onCore UK. Both organisations very clearly and concisely highlighted the benefits that a central repository for tissue samples would have on the future of research and gave insight into the need for a co-ordinated effort in collating and developing standard procedures for sample collection, storage and annotation to ensure consistency and minimise experimental variation. This session was an excellent opportunity to compare and contrast the approaches that the UK and US are taking to achieve integrated tissue banking facilities that will serve as powerful resources for their clinical research communities.

The conference ended with a session on E-Research Infrastructure. This session featured the perspectives of leading computer scientists from UCL and the University of Manchester on more technical and philosophical issues on the future of GRID infrastructures in facilitating the future success and sustainability of cancer e-research.

The joint NCRI Informatics-caBIG™ conference was a great success

giving attendants the opportunity to discover the progress that has been made in cancer informatics, establish international contacts and share ideas on the best ways to overcome the challenges that exist in ensuring that a truly interoperable, integrated, research environment can be developed and sustained.

For further information about the conference, including access to the slide presentations, please see www.cancerinformatics.org.uk/caBig.html



Participants in the first annual joint NCRI Informatics & caBIG™ Conference, London, UK

Meet the NCRI Informatics Section Heads

Meet Dr. Fiona Reddington



Fiona graduated in Pharmacology from University College Dublin and obtained a PhD in Neurophysiology from Guy's and St Thomas's Medical School in London. Fiona has worked as a project manager for the NHS, managed the UCL NTRAC Centre and was responsible for Bioinformatics at the NTRAC Coordinating Centre in Oxford. She joined the NCRI Informatics Initiative as a Programme Manager in 2003 and took up the post of Section Head of Community Alliances in 2006. She is married and lives in London.

You wouldn't know it but I am really good at

Karate, training greyhounds and tongue twisters.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

Dishonesty and fickleness.

Which words or phrases do you most overuse?

Numpty

What single thing would improve the quality of your life?

A private high-speed rail link to the South of Spain – I could avoid airport queues and luggage restrictions and Mr Cat could travel with me in style.

How would you like to be remembered?

As someone who could be bothered.

What is the most important lesson life has taught you?

No one ever wished they spent more time in the office.

What's the most embarrassing CD you own?

The original "Now" and "That's What I Call Music" albums (although they are so old they might not count as they are actually on tape!)

If you're staying in on your own, what do you secretly watch on the telly?

"You've been Framed" or any mindless celebrity trivia programme.

What is your favourite hobby or pastime?

Foreign travel

Which item in your wardrobe would shock the fashion police?

A Britpop-esque Kangol hooded rain jacket which makes me look like a thug. I have had gangs of menacing youths move away from me when I wear it!

Meet Dr. Alan Hogg



Alan is Section Head, Platform Development at the NCRI Informatics Coordination Unit. His background is in neurophysiology, but he has spent much of his career working in the clinical trials area within the pharmaceutical industry, specifically in the application of technology to data collection and management.

You wouldn't know it but I am really good at

Bricklaying

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

Dishonesty

Which words or phrases do you most overuse?

Several terms I learnt while living in the East End of London that are best not written down. Also "keeping you in the loop" from my consulting days.

What single thing would improve the quality of your life?

A 3 day working week for the same salary would be nice!

How would you like to be remembered?

I don't honestly mind.

What is the most important lesson life has taught you?

Having lost my father and brother to cancer at relatively early ages - to enjoy life and to make time for those who are important to you.

What's the most embarrassing CD you own?

My wife would say my Hawkwind collection, but probably an old Wham album.

If you're staying in on your own, what do you secretly watch on the telly?

Nothing – it is my chance to turn it off and play loud music instead.

What is your favourite hobby or pastime?

Wine, walking and gardening in equal measure.

Which item in your wardrobe would shock the fashion police?

It used to be a pair of Brutus jeans with 30inch flares from my youth - until they came back into fashion!!! Now that dates me.