Training the Next Generation of Cancer Research Leaders:

Development of the Experimental Cancer Medicines Centre (ECMC) Junior Investigator Network Group (JING)

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About the ECMC Network

The Experimental Cancer Medicine Centre (ECMC) Network is a unique UK-wide initiative jointly funded by Cancer Research UK and the Health Departments of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Providing £70 million of infrastructure support, the Network of 18 centres (and nine paediatric centres) brings together world-leading scientists and clinicians to drive the discovery, development and testing of new anti-cancer treatments for patients.

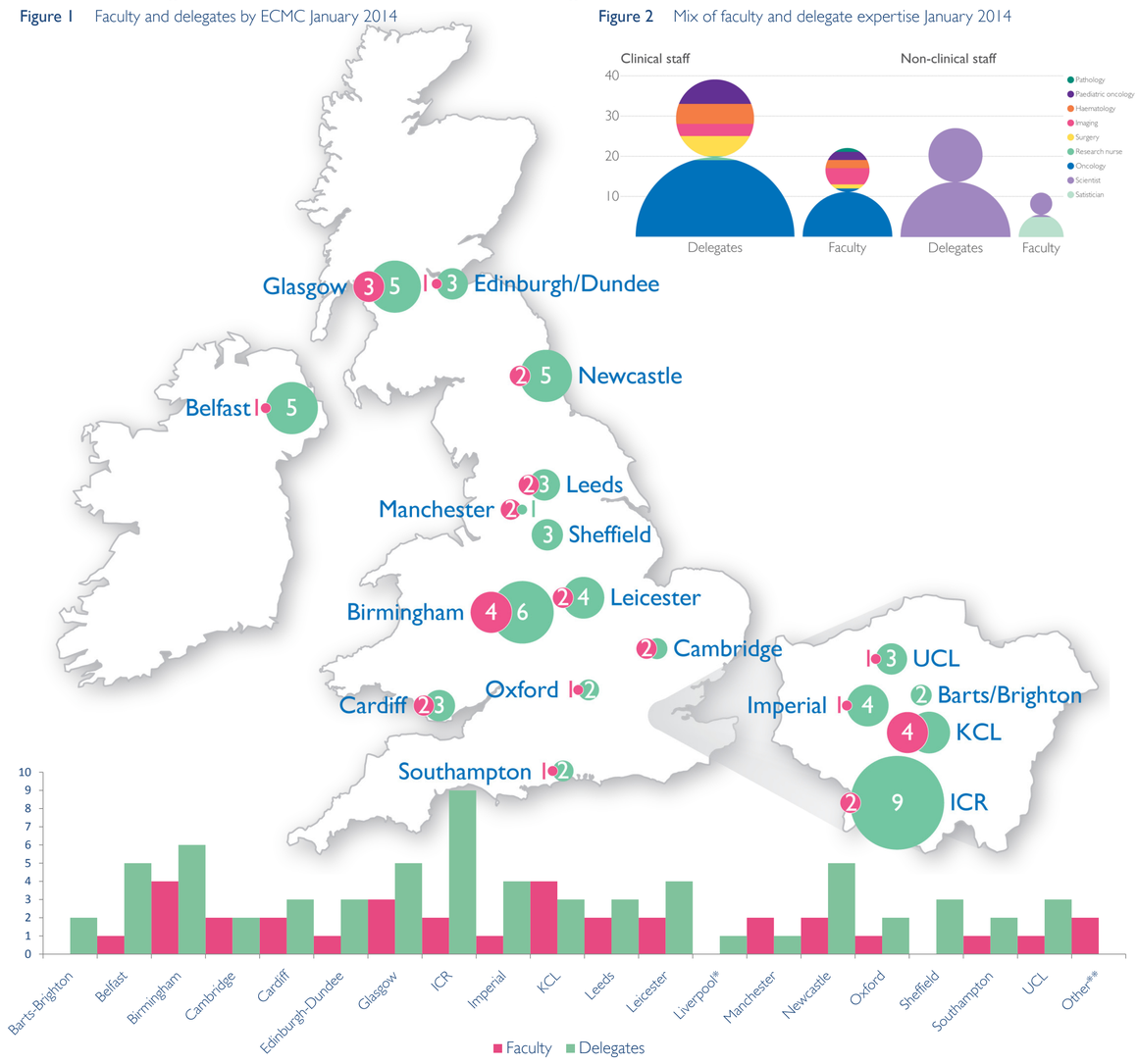
Introduction

The continued success of translational and early phase clinical trial research within the Experimental Cancer Medicines Centre (ECMC) Network relies upon the continued development of a strong cadre of research leaders of the future. The training of both clinical and nonclinical junior investigators in this area has however been segmented. The Junior Investigator Network Group (JING) is a peer network of junior investigators from across clinical and scientific backgrounds founded to support the development of young researchers across all fields of translational research within the ECMC, including oncology, haematology, paediatrics, radiology and surgery. For full remit see links/ QR code below.

Methods

Different training events have been organised by a steering committee of 12 junior investigators, based on feedback from both faculty and attendees from pilot training days held within the ECMC Network. The main aims of such workshops and courses are to develop the skills and knowledge of investigators in early phase and translational study design through didactic lectures and interactive sessions. A core group of senior investigators was also invited to facilitate such events. Figures 1 and 2 show the mix of faculty and delegates who took part in the training course in January 2014 in Birmingham.

Figure 1 Faculty and delegates by ECMC January 2014



*Liverpool is a centre in the ECMC paediatric network
**faculty or speakers not from an ECMC

Figure 2 Mix of faculty and delegate expertise January 2014

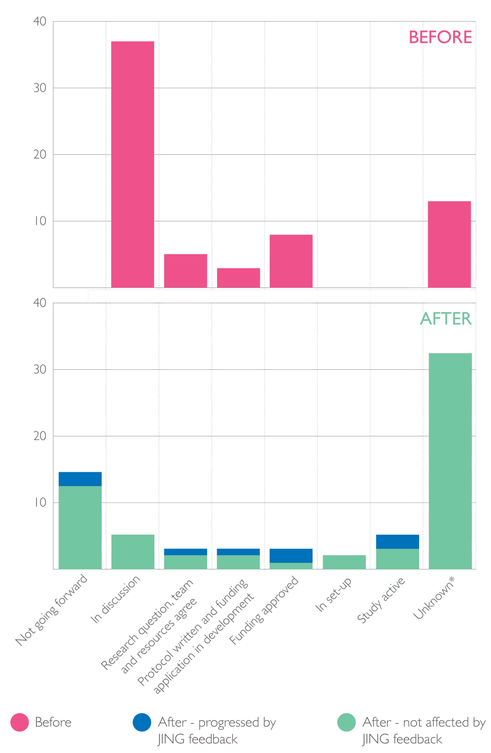
Results

Training events, including a successful two-day residential training workshop have been organised. This workshop, entitled "Training the Next Generation", brought together 66 junior investigators from different disciplines to develop their skills and knowledge in early phase and translational study design through interactive presentations of novel trial designs by junior investigators, formal lectures and a networking "world café" event. Training was facilitated by 33 senior investigators from different fields of oncology, who shared personal experiences and expertise. Participant feedback for the majority of sessions were rated excellent and considered relevant and useful, while faculty members were highly rated (see figure 3 a&b for visual representations of word frequencies for key learnings and overall impression).

Following the event in January participants were followed up in July 2014 on the outcomes of their studies presented to peers at the meeting and whether feedback from that session had had an impact on their progression. 37 of the 66 participants responded and of those 8 had indicated that feedback from the study discussion had had an impact on the study's progression. Of the participants who indicated that the feedback had had no impact common reasons were that studies presented were hypothetical, already ongoing and had therefore progressed without feedback or other unavoidable circumstances had prevented the study going forward (such as personal circumstance or scientific question no longer valid).

Figure 3a & b Word clouds of key learning and overall impression key words January 2014

Figure 4a & b Delegates' study ideas and progression following training in January 2014 surveyed July 2014 (Before and After)



*Unknown represents delegates who have not yet responded to the survey

Conclusions

The 'Training the Next Generation' event addresses a gap in training for junior investigators in early phase and translational research and helps to equip trainees in the network with the necessary knowledge to forge their own careers. This model of training developed *"by junior investigators for junior investigators"* draws on the existing skills and experience of senior investigators from an established network like the ECMC, and could be readily transferable to other networks with links to relevant senior researcher expertise and different disease areas with minimal funding requirements.

To join JING or for more information on the January 2015 training:

ecmcnetwork.org

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