

Chairman's Foreword

Cancer, its prevention, diagnosis and treatment are a major challenge for our society. Cancer is an illness that afflicts large numbers of people, from all backgrounds, and is feared by individuals and families alike. Yet there is much reason for optimism; research holds out the possibility of major strides forward in prevention and cure in the coming decades. We are witnessing major improvements in the treatment of many types of cancer, but these welcome improvements will also place substantial and diverse pressures on our health care system.


The ageing of our population will result in an approximate doubling in the number of people who will develop cancer in Ireland over the next 15 years. It is self-evident that the current services will not be in a position to meet the substantial demand for treatment, cure and care.

Keeping pace with these demands will require a major government commitment to cancer services in the coming years, which in turn will require the earliest possible decisions on investment, human resource planning and the organisation of services. Our aim is to deliver a universal, quality-based and timely service, in line with the best that is currently available internationally.

To address the rapidly rising burden of cancer, this second National Cancer Strategy *A Strategy for Cancer Control in Ireland 2006* advocates a comprehensive cancer control policy programme. Cancer control is a whole population, integrated and cohesive approach to cancer that involves prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, and supportive and palliative care. It places a major emphasis on measurement of need and on addressing inequalities and implies that we must focus on ensuring that all elements of cancer policy and service are delivered to the maximum possible extent.

This Strategy also focuses substantially on reform and reorganisation of the way we deliver cancer services, in order to ensure that future services are consistent and are associated with a high-quality experience for patients and their carers. There is evidence of considerable variation in cancer survival between regions and also significant fragmentation of services for cancer patients. These interrelated factors are of major concern to the National Cancer Forum.

This Strategy will ensure that the cancer experience in all parts of the country is comparable and is of the highest possible standard, an approach that underpins the recommendations concerning the creation of the Framework for Quality in Cancer Control. This framework will be vital to the development of cancer control as it will provide the means through which many of the recommendations can be implemented, monitored and quality-assured to the benefit – most importantly – of patients, but also to the benefit of those who provide and manage and those who fund the service.



This Strategy for Cancer Control aims to build on the major successes in cancer that have been delivered under the 1996 National Cancer Strategy. Cancer services have been transformed over its lifetime with manifold increases in infrastructure, services, clinicians and other health professionals. We see every reason to aspire to improve Ireland's international position in cancer so that we are towards the top of the international league table. This will require strong political, medical and executive leadership as well as significant investment programmes that are based on the principles and policies we have outlined. Cancer patients who access our health services should as a matter of right receive quality-assured treatment and care regardless of geography. To achieve this, we are recommending a major Framework for Quality in Cancer Control with an extensive role for the Health Information and Quality Authority. The much-needed expansion of services and its associated investment should be based on the quality and organisation model we have outlined. I wish to acknowledge the advice and support of the interim Health Information and Quality Authority and the Irish Health Services Accreditation Board in developing this framework.

At the later stages of the development of the Strategy, we held detailed discussions with the senior management team of the Health Service Executive, the Health Research Board and the Irish Cancer Society. We received significant endorsement and support for our work and the recommendations we have laid down in this document.

On a personal note, I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Forum members who have given of their time and effort to complete this important and demanding work. Their professional input and dedication was impressive and it was my privilege to have been appointed by Mícheál Martin T.D., Minister for Health and Children to chair such a Forum. I wish to express appreciation of the enormous support provided by Tracey Conroy, Assistant Principal Officer, Cancer Policy Unit in the Department of Health and Children. Her ability, energy and dedication as Secretary to the Forum were outstanding. The Forum relied considerably on the advice and direction presented to us by the general public, health care professionals and representative bodies; I am delighted to acknowledge their contribution and that of my fellow Regional Cancer Directors.

As Chairman and on behalf of the second National Cancer Forum, I am delighted to submit this Strategy for Cancer Control to the Tánaiste and Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney, T.D. I do so with confidence that it will be implemented as a major element of health policy.



Professor H. Paul Redmond
Chairman