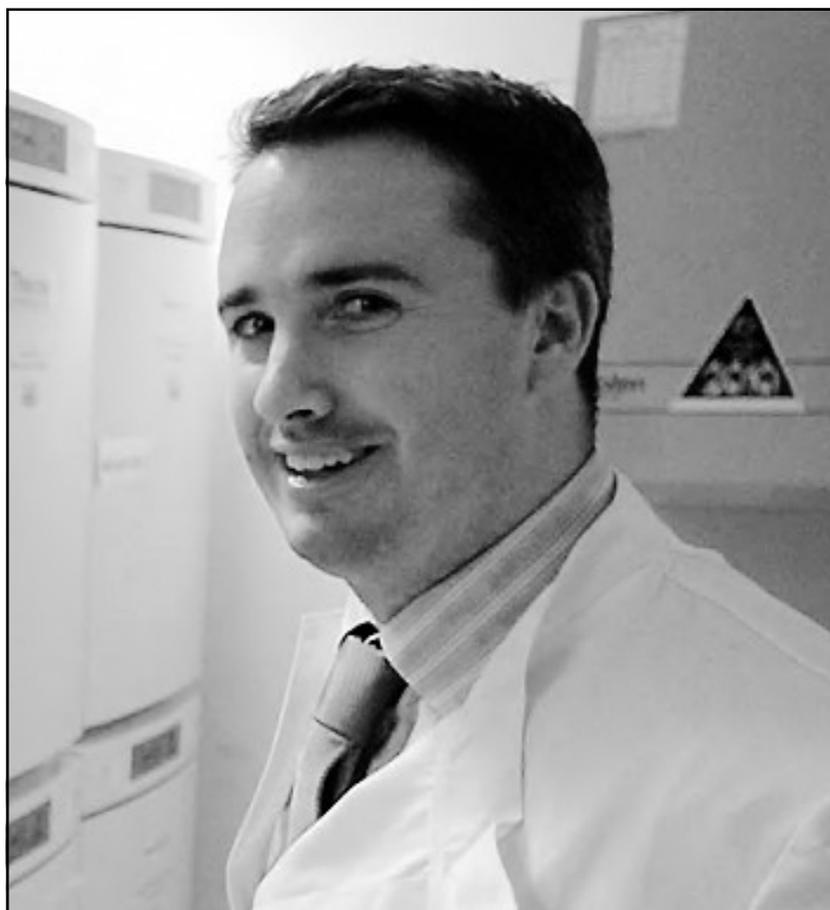


“ Basically, people under the age of fifty who have colorectal cancer are contacted and it is their direct family that are targeted to allow for early detection of the disease. If cancerous cells are found during the early stages of the disease it is very treatable and curable.



Dr Declan Soden, general manager of Cork Cancer Research Centre (CCRC).

# Cork's part in cancer fight

**C**ANCER affects one-in-three people in this country.

Sadly, the likelihood is that you will know someone who has been or will be a victim of this destructive disease. So, the next time a pink ribbon donation is in order, dig deep as you could be investing in your or a loved one's future treatment.

The term cancer describes a number of different illnesses characterised by abnormal growth and spread of cells. This overgrowth of cells can form a tumour and these tumours can be either benign or malignant.

Benign tumours do not invade surrounding tissue, therefore they are not life-threatening — though they should be removed as they can cause problems.

Malignant tumours aim to maliciously spread as far as they can and are extremely

**By YVONNE McSORLEY**

hazardous to health.

They leach into the lymph system or blood supply and effectively poison other organs and systems over time, causing them to fail and resulting in death.

These tumours are being constantly monitored and researched in labs all over the world.

So what's going on with regards to cancer research under our very noses here in Cork city?

I visited Dr Declan Soden, general manager of Cork Cancer Research Centre (CCRC), to find out more.

The CCRC was established by Professor Gerald O'Sullivan in 1999 in order to form a partnership between University College Cork and Cork University Hospital.

Under the director are 25 researchers, all with

a common goal — to develop new, less invasive treatments.

“The activities of the centre include screening, prevention and early detection of the disease,” said Dr Soden.

With regards to screening there is a clinic in operation in the Mercy Hospital, funded by the centre, to identify people who are at a high risk of developing colorectal cancer.

Dr Soden explained: “People under the age of 50 who have colorectal cancer are contacted and it is their direct family that are targeted to allow for early detection. If cancerous cells are found during the early stages of the disease it is very treatable and curable.”

A preventative study is also ongoing, involving a chemo-preventative agent called curcumin, a dye found in curries.

The component has been found to have very

potent anti-carcinogenic properties and has also been seen to decrease the risk of colorectal and oesophageal cancer.

As well as that, the most active areas of research at the clinic are gene therapy and looking at ways to carry out less invasive surgery.

“We have just received permission from The Irish Medicines Board to do gene therapy in patients, the first of its kind in this country,” said Dr Soden.

Discovering less invasive ways of carrying out cancer surgery would make a huge difference to patients and the CCRC has researched electro-chemotherapy treatment using the drug Bleomycin.

Here, an electric pulse allows for the tumour to be targeted, specifically, allowing for the drug level to be toxic in this area only, thus ensuring there are no side effects around the surrounding tissues and in the body.

Gene therapy would then be used afterwards to boost the body's immune system and prevent secondary cancer from forming.

The future is bright but the research is expensive and securing funding is a constant battle for the centre.

Although some of the ongoing research in Cork is part funded by Cancer Research Ireland (CRI), much of the funding comes from grant authorities, the Department of Health and Children, the UCC Foundation, corporate donors and fundraising events.

Dr Soden said: “Without the driving force of the fundraising events, CCRC just wouldn't be in operation.”

If you want to donate to cancer research in Cork directly or if you have any ideas on fundraising, contact Declan on (021) 4901335 or at d.soden@ucc.ie



**ROBERT O'SHEA**

YESTERDAY at 3pm I was out walking in the wind and snow. The wind was strong enough to blow over my wheelie bin and the snow, while light enough, felt like slushpuppy after slushpuppy being thrown in my face.

So what was I doing outside? Was there an emergency? Did I have somewhere pressing to go? Or am I simply a troubled individual?

And why am I writing these questions when I already know the answer?

One of the advantages of walking your dog in such weather is that there are fewer people (and dogs) around. Which is a good thing because Harry prefers not to be seen with me when we are walking, something he proves when I take off his leash by moving away from me quickly.

The reason I take him off the leash in the first place is so we can play 'catch.'

This is where I throw a ball and Harry runs after it, then past it, then back towards me without it, proudly failing to live up to his Labrador 'retriever' categorisation. Then I say 'ball' and he runs back towards it, picks it up, runs back to me, but refuses to drop it. Our game of 'catch' usually consists of this one throw because of his steadfast refusal to release the ball from his teeth's grip (trying to pull something from a dog's mouth is their equivalent of chess).

While there is surely some holistic benefit to being out and about and trying to prise open a dog's jaw, we wouldn't be outside at all if it weren't for the guilt trip Harry lays on me about being cooped up inside all day.

I knew I was in trouble when he got up from his nap and walked out of the sitting room. This is his little preamble to his real amble. Do you know the way you sometimes walk into a room but forget what you went in there for? I believe this is what happens to dogs every time they walk into any room because a couple of seconds later he is back and performing his “I want something” routine which consists of a low growl followed by walking backwards while barking and staring up at me like a saint looking towards heaven in an early Renaissance painting. The only way to put a stop to this, short of putting him down, is to take him for his walk.

Those who read and memorised last week's

column will recall that I said this week I would explain why walking the dog is like the internet. Not for the owner — for me, walking the dog in the rain, being dragged along behind this surprisingly powerful canine lump, two hands gripped on the lead, feels more like water-skiing — but for the dog.

First you have to put on his leash, or to put it another way connect up.

Why do dogs get so excited about going out on walks? Their walk is where they access information from the wider world. To a dog on a walk, the ground is his worldwide web. He's sniffing everything, keeping up with the latest news.

Sniffing at another dog's wee to him is as good as getting an email. And after 'receiving' his e-mail, he then 'sends' one back. And like the internet, he may never have met this other dog before.

You can leave him on the lead or go broadband by unleashing him. But be careful when you do, because he might soon be sniffing at other dog's butts, the dog equivalent of on-line pornography.

Sometimes, while the dog is benefiting from all this entertainment, I can get a bit bored. I'd like to watch TV, or be on the internet myself rather than be wandering around in the rain.

But then I think: Who else can you go on an hour-long walk with without having to exchange a single word, not a single goddamn word. A wife? A sibling? A lover?

An hour blissfully free from any interruptions or conversation, other than perhaps 'Hup! Hup!' or 'Oh Jesus, get away from them cows.'

So I often lose myself in coma-like reverie when out on these walks and completely zone out of everything except putting one foot in front of the other.

Which explains why when I arrived back at my door yesterday at 4pm and bent down to take off Harry's lead, I discovered empty air where his neck should have been.

As of this morning, he still hasn't returned. I know he's out there on the internet superhighway.

Harry, it's time to log off. So if you see a golden Labrador wandering around the city, could you please get in contact.

He has also probably got a blue ball in his mouth.