

PublisherInfo		
PublisherName	:	BioMed Central
PublisherLocation	:	London
PublisherImprintName	:	BioMed Central

Cancer Research UK names new head

ArticleInfo		
ArticleID	:	4797
ArticleDOI	:	10.1186/gb-spotlight-20030620-02
ArticleCitationID	:	spotlight-20030620-02
ArticleSequenceNumber	:	149
ArticleCategory	:	Research news
ArticleFirstPage	:	1
ArticleLastPage	:	3
ArticleHistory	:	RegistrationDate : 2003-6-20 OnlineDate : 2003-6-20
ArticleCopyright	:	BioMed Central Ltd2003
ArticleGrants	:	
ArticleContext	:	130594411

Pat Hagan

Email: pat.hagan@btconnect.com

[Cancer Research UK](#), the world's largest independent cancer research body, has appointed a new chief executive.

Alex Markham, currently director of the Molecular Medicines Unit at the [University of Leeds](#) and honorary consultant physician at [Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust](#), will take up his new position in September 2003.

The job of chief executive became available after Paul Nurse announced earlier this year he was [leaving to become president of Rockefeller University](#) in New York.

In addition to his clinical and academic posts, Markham serves on the Department of Health's [Committee on Safety of Medicines](#) and is also involved with the government's [Gene Therapy Advisory Committee](#).

Announcing the appointment Tuesday (June 17), Cancer Research UK said in a press statement that Markham, who is 52, "has also held senior advisory roles for the Medical Research Council and the Wellcome Trust and has extensive management experience in the pharmaceutical industry."

Markham said in a statement that it was "an honor and a privilege" to have been chosen. "My job will be to maintain the charity's world-class research and build on recent advances to take new knowledge into the clinic for the benefit of cancer patients."

Researchers who have worked with Markham in the past predict he will do well in the job. [Stuart Orkin](#), a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator at Harvard Medical School, collaborated with Markham almost 20 years ago on the genetics of the blood disorder β -thalassaemia. "I always found him to be an energetic, imaginative, and engaging person with a vision of the future," Orkin told us. "He will bring this energy and vision, I am sure, to this new challenge. His background in genetics fits well with contemporary cancer research."

And [Bob Williamson](#), director of the [Murdoch Children's Research Institute](#) at the University of Melbourne, described Markham as someone who was "always ahead of his time."

Williamson told us he knew Markham well when he was a molecular biologist in industry in the 1970s and a medical student in the 1980s. "He recognized the biotech potential of molecular genetics long before most people and therefore worked in industry when most top scientists went straight from their doctorate into academia."

Williamson pointed out that it will take time for Markham to make even small changes, simply because Cancer Research UK is "like a very large ship."

But he believes one of Markham's strongest points is his "people skills," which will help him to move the organization forward in new directions. But "these directions will have to be combined with the best clinical data, epidemiology, a good knowledge of the community and its ethical concerns, and an appreciation of the strengths of biotechnology."

"That is where Alex's real skills lie and why this is an excellent appointment," said Williamson.

References

1. Cancer Research UK, [<http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/>]
2. University of Leeds, [<http://www.leeds.ac.uk>]
3. Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust, [<http://www.leedsteachinghospitals.com/>]
4. Powledge TM: The Englishman coming to New York *The Scientist*, January 13, 2003., [<http://www.the-scientist.com/news/20030131/07/>]
5. Committee on Safety of Medicines, [<http://www.mca.gov.uk/aboutagency/regframework/csm/csmhome.htm>]
6. Gene Therapy Advisory Committee, [<http://www.doh.gov.uk/genetics/gtac/>]
7. Stuart Orkin, [<http://www.hhmi.org/research/investigators/orkin.html>]
8. Bob Williamson, [http://murdoch.rch.unimelb.edu.au/pages/about_us/directors.html]
9. Murdoch Children's Research Institute, [<http://murdoch.rch.unimelb.edu.au/pages/about.html>]