



## BETTER-B Newsletter Issue 4, December 2020

### TRIAL PROGRESS

We are delighted to update that our UK trial sites in Hull, London and Nottingham are now open to recruitment! Our research teams at all three sites have been actively screening for potentially eligible participants and we eagerly await our first trial recruit.

Having worked with our patient and public involvement group, our updated trial protocol now allows for consent and data collection to be via virtual visits so that we can ensure the safety and wellbeing of our participants, as well as our research teams, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although we have continued to face challenges due to the pandemic, all of our sites have been working hard to progress trial set-up. Ireland, Germany, Italy and Poland are at various stages of their local approvals processes and will be opening in early 2021.

### BETTER-B & COVID-19

Since the last newsletter, BETTER-B researchers have continued to fight for improvements in the lives of those affected by COVID-19.

In the last months, national and international research projects spearheaded by members of the BETTER-B consortium have begun, such as the CovPall Study in the United Kingdom (Cicely Saunders Institute, King's College London) and the PallPan Study in Germany (LMU Klinikum Munich, University Hospital Cologne). We also amended our trial protocol to include patients suffering from chronic fibrotic lung disease following SARS-CoV-2 infection.

### 3 questions for...Massimo Costantini, Integration Analysis lead

#### What is your role in the BETTER-B project?

I am the Scientific Director of the Azienda USL-IRCCS in Reggio Emilia (Italy), one of the project partners, and the Work Package 4 lead. This WP is focused on the analysis and integration of quantitative and qualitative results, guaranteeing a rigorous approach to data analysis and interpretation. WP4 will develop and implement a strategy of analysis to explore which patient characteristics are most associated with benefit from the trial intervention as well as a global synthesis of the final results in terms of benefits to patients, persons close to them, clinical services, policy and the EU.



#### What is your academic background?

I am a physician with a specialty degree in Medical Oncology, but my clinical practice background is in Palliative Medicine - a discipline not recognized in Italian academia. My research background is in Clinical Epidemiology. Consequently, my career has been a mixture of clinical settings. I have been Medical Director of two hospices in Genoa and of a Hospital Palliative Care Unit in Reggio Emilia. My main research interests are in experimental research and quantitative assessment of the impact of palliative care. As the Scientific Director of the Oncological Research Institute in Reggio Emilia, my time for research and clinical work is limited and my job is mainly facilitating and supporting other researchers - from basic science to clinical - to do research at their best.

#### Why did you join the BETTER-B consortium?

I have a long history of collaboration in research with Prof. Irene Higginson and the Cicely Saunders Institute, and for a few years I have been a Visiting Professor in the department. Thus, I immediately thought BETTER-B was a great opportunity to improve our understanding and knowledge in the treatment of breathlessness - a frequent and difficult-to-treat symptom of advanced disease. The consortium is a fantastic opportunity to create an efficient network and collaboration between two different disciplines: Palliative Care and Respiratory Medicine. Overall, I am optimistic about this research, although this year made it difficult for us all getting on with the project as we had initially planned.

For more information please contact [better-b@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:better-b@kcl.ac.uk) or visit our website <https://betterbreathe.eu/>

BETTER-B is funded by the European Union's Horizon2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 825319