

The Lofty Oak from a Small Acorn Grows

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Tenovus was founded in Wales in the year 1943 by Eddie Price and a group of nine business friends as a means of trying to improve the quality of life for hospital patients.

Sir Charles Illingworth liked the name of Tenovus and in 1967 obtained permission from Cardiff to use the name in Scotland. The main purpose of Tenovus Scotland would be to fund innovative local projects in preliminary feasibility studies. Proposals would have to satisfy appraisal by both a local and independent national scientific advisory committee. The aim was to provide evidence from pilot projects which would subsequently justify major funding from large research organisations such as the Medical Research Council and the Wellcome Trust. These aims remain today. Tenovus Scotland continues to support pilot studies, usually conducted by young research workers embarking upon their careers, and grants do not normally exceed £13,000.

Has Tenovus Scotland been successful in achieving its aims? This short communication reviews the outcome of projects funded by the Strathclyde Regional Committee in the three years 1999-2001.

Results

The outcome of grants awarded in years 1999, 2000 and 2001 has been reviewed by completion of a brief form presented to the researchers by electronic mail. Table 1 indicates the level of subsequent research funding which was obtained as a result of the Tenovus funded pilot studies.

Overall, subsequent funding was more than ten times the sum of the initial Tenovus funding.

Further research was supported by organisations including the Department of Health, Chief Scientist's Office, Medical Research Council, the Wellcome Trust, Wellbeing, and the British Heart Foundation. A total of 38 papers/posters were published or presented.

Discussion

A principle of Tenovus Scotland is that funds are allocated to hospitals and universities in the area in which they are raised. The emphasis on funding has always been to "pump prime" innovative research, especially when young research workers are involved. Not all research hypotheses are correct. Pilot projects allow ideas to be explored and then developed if found to be successful. The corollary is that unsuccessful projects are identified at an early stage and redirected.

Funding of medical research is never easy. It depends on hard work by many people. This paper concentrates on what has been achieved by the Tenovus Committees in the Strathclyde area. Excellent work has, of course, been achieved by other committees in Scotland. Overall, the late Sir Charles Illingworth could be justly proud of his initiative.

Acknowledgements: Thanks are due to the members of the Glasgow and Paisley Committees whose enthusiastic and determined fund raising activities over the years have allowed Tenovus in the Strathclyde area to be successful. Thanks to the legal fraternity who have supported Tenovus through trusts and bequests and to the many, many members of the public who have supported fund raising events and have made donations.

Year	No. Pilot Projects	Initial Grants Total	Subsequent Funding
1999	6	£74,963	£1,110,405
2000	8	£73,194	£145,638
2001	6	£45,414	£772,000
TOTAL	20	£193,571	£2,028, 043