

Project LEAD Institute, La Jolla, July 2012: The View from Over the Pond

We were exceptionally fortunate to be offered a scholarship to attend this year's Project LEAD Institute training in beautiful La Jolla. We were both encouraged to do this by past UK Grads who were all stimulated by attending. We do not have anything like this in the UK, so this was an opportunity not to be missed.

The organisation of the week was superb – busy, but still with plenty of time for debate and chat. The study topics were challenging, but we are sure everyone will have taken something from them to use in the future; therefore enabling us to better play our roles 'at the table'. The skills we ourselves acquired to take back to the UK are invaluable, and will help us to critically evaluate research protocols, an area in which we are already involved.

For us, speaking to everyone about our health services was fascinating, and what was evident was that despite the obvious differences, there were a lot of similarities. In the UK we are also having a screening debate. Our system is different – we are all automatically offered screening from age 47-73 every 3 years – but the debate is should we go for a more personalised service depending on risk? As with the US we yet don't know the answer. It will be interesting to follow this over the coming months.

The role NBCC has in national strategy is highly impressive and is something the UK can learn from. We are getting better at getting our voice heard, but it 'is a work in progress'.

Our 'take home' from the week is that we need to share information and very much hope that we will continue to do this with a good flow of emails back and forth over the pond. And we will not forget the delightful people we met who all made us so welcome and had such respect and warmth for one another.

Thank you again for this opportunity to advance our advocacy skills.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Mairead MacKenzie and Patricia Fairbrother
Independent Cancer Patients' Voice (UK)
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