

# Scientists say EU is delaying life-saving drugs

**ANDREW READ,**  
IN SALFORD

EU legislation designed to protect patient safety is "undoubtedly costing lives", according to UK cancer scientists. They claim drugs that could save lives are being bogged down by pedantic regulation.

A similar situation could develop in the Republic, according to an Irish cancer specialist. "There is a very definite threat" to cancer research in these islands, said Dr Brian Moulton, of the Irish Clinical

Oncology Research Group.

Dr Richard Sullivan, head of clinical programmes at Cancer Research UK, said the EU super-state was harming cancer patients. New clinical trials in the Republic and Northern Ireland would produce "very good deliverables, but the EU may well make them difficult".

Prof Malcolm Stevens, of Cancer Research UK, said: "I find it incredible frustrating that whereas I could once go from developing a new drug to testing it in patients in a matter of months, it's now routinely taking

more than two years. That delay is undoubtedly costing lives."

There has been a 40-fold increase in the number of regulations on UK cancer research in the last decade, according to scientists from Cancer Research UK who yesterday spoke at the British Association's Festival of Science in Salford, Greater Manchester.

Dr Sullivan said there have been 44 new sets of regulations in the last 10 years, many a direct result of European directives and legislation. This has been produced by nervous bureaucrats in

Brussels and London, partly in response to high-profile medical scandals.

Prof Stevens said: "I don't believe patients care if their clinical sample is examined by X, Y or Z. For patients that have had every possible therapy - surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy - they're at the end of the road. They may have two to three months left. What's frustrating for us is life and death for them. Their only chance is to participate in clinical trial. They want to be the lucky one in a trial."

New EU legislation is due for

implantation in May, said Dr Moulton. "Key will be how member-states interpret this legislation. If the Republic has a very strict interpretation, like in France or Spain, it will have a severe impact."

Phortress, a new anti-breast cancer drug developed in Prof Stevens's laboratory in Nottingham, was ready for human trials three years ago. "Three years later it still hasn't gone into to trial. It has been hung up by the necessity to cross the T's and dot the I's of every conceivable protocol that might be involved."