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Project Summary:

Drugs such as chemotherapy can successfully reduce the risk of cancer recurrence after surgery but can cause heart problems as an increasingly common side-effect. Patients and clinicians face difficult decisions when weighing the benefits of treatments against the potential toxicity.

Newer anti-cancer therapies, which are proving very effective but also very costly, can also damage the heart, which is compounding this problem. Many cancer survivors are now living with long term heart problems after treatment which affects their quality of life, survival prospects and also consumes scarce NHS resources.

To fully understand the health implications as well as the economic impact it is necessary to model the risks and benefits of drugs to patients and the NHS.

Edinburgh is running a variety of clinical trials looking at different treatment intensities and looking at new strategies for reducing the risk of heart problems. One of this trials is Cardiac Care which is looking at different heart-protective drugs in preventing the development of heart muscle failure in breast cancer patients receiving anthracycline-containing chemotherapy.

The visit to Leeds enabled me to tap into world class modelling expertise to better understand the balance between anti-cancer-effectiveness and heart protection. This will be of great help to better interpret the ongoing clinical trials for the benefit of patients.