

CRI QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER:

July – Sept 2020

Welcome to the 3rd CRI quarterly newsletter for 2020.

The newsletter showcases the many cancer-related research activities in the Faculty of Health Sciences to research colleagues, clinicians, funders and the public. The newsletter is available via email and published on the [CRI website](#).

News & events

News from the SAMRC Gynaecology Cancer Research Centre (GCRC):

GCRC is committed to producing research that's promotes patient-centred care. The Department of Obstetrics Gynaecology, Department of Radiation Oncology, and the School of Public Health and Family Medicine conducted a qualitative study exploring women's sexual well-being post treatment for gynaecological cancer. Results show that most women experienced changes in sexual functioning, sexual identity and sexual relationships throughout their cancer journey and highlights the need for holistic psycho-sexual care and support for gynaecological cancer patients. This study has been presented and discussed on numerous platforms. Currently the research team are developing information pamphlets for patients (and family members). Dr Ros Boa is also investigating ways to better supply dilators to women treated with pelvic radiotherapy.



The Sexuality Project Team: Behind left: Sorrel Pitcher, Dr Ros Boa. Front left: Dr Nazia Fakie, Dr Tracy Adams

On 16 September 2020, the GCRC and Standing Committee on Sexual and Reproductive Health including HIV/AIDS (SCORA) hosted an online event about sexuality within the context of gynaecological cancer. The speakers were Dr Tracey Adams (gynae-oncologist) and

Sorrel Pitcher (qualitative social scientist). Dr Adams spoke about the side effects of gynaecological cancer treatments and the impact of these on sexual functioning and Sorrel Pitcher presented the study results and discussed ways that gynaecological cancer patients can be supported. The event was attended by approximately 45 people, including medical students and healthcare providers. The recording of the presentation will be made available on the [GCRC](#) website.

The Medical Biotechnology & Immunotherapy Research Unit review on epidermal growth factor receptor-specific immunotherapies.

This review recently published in *Oncotarget* (September 2020) represents the most recent update in the development of epidermal growth factor receptor-specific immunotherapies, ranging from monoclonal antibodies, antibody-drug conjugates, photoactivable antibody-drug conjugates, immunotoxins and targeted human cytolytic fusion proteins, in the treatment of various malignancies. Since the field of medical biotechnology and immunotherapy in Africa is still at its infancy, such publications become a necessity in order to increase the body of knowledge, attract collaboration and secure investments needed to push these internationally competitive and novel technologies into clinical application. We have listed this review in our list of publications (*see publication 10*).

CRI Postgraduate 3-minute thesis competition

On 6th August 2020, the CRI Postgraduate team, led by Saif Feroz Khan and Victoria Damerell, held the first CRI 3-minute thesis competition. This was an innovative, online event that allowed postgraduate students to present their cancer-related research work. Students were given the task of presenting an overview of their project using 1 static slide, limited scientific terminology, and had just 3 minutes to captivate their audience. This format allowed postgraduate cancer researchers from the Faculty of Health Sciences to showcase their research with a twist on the usual data heavy, often esoteric format of scientific presentations. The event turned out to be a fun-filled and educational competition with students from clinical sciences, public health and molecular sciences all presenting their cancer research-based projects to an exceptionally high standard. It was also encouraging that the event attracted over 50 members from the student and staff community with many relevant questions posed by the audience. After much deliberation, the judges (Professors Shamley and Moodley) announced the top three presentations, with prizes awarded to the winners:

- 1st - Abid Ali (PhD candidate in the Prince Laboratory)
- 2nd - Claire Bellis (MSc candidate in the Prince Laboratory)
- 3rd - Victoria Damerell (PhD candidate in the Prince Laboratory)

We hope that this is the first of many more of this exciting event hosted by the PG CRI team.

News from the African Head and Neck Society (AfHNS)

The African Head and Neck Society (AfHNS) presented its 4th monthly AfHNS Virtual Tumour Board on the 9th October. These Zoom meetings are held on the 2nd Friday of the month and comprise 3 clinical case presentations of head and neck cancers from around Africa. It has attracted up to 150 attendees from Africa, Middle East, Europe, USA, India and Pakistan and is truly multidisciplinary with ENT, maxillofacial surgery, oncology, pathology and plastic surgery attendees. This MDT initiative illustrates the positive impact of virtual conference platforms in relation to crossing institutional, national and disciplinary boundaries to benefit cancer care, collaboration and research.

Database feature

This quarter we are showing one of our newest databases, the Oncology COVID-19 database. This database will register all new cancer patients and all cancer patients attending radiotherapy or chemotherapy during the COVID-19 pandemic (from March 2020 onwards). It will use the Clinicom platform cross-referenced with the Provincial Health Data Centre to obtain data of oncology patients diagnosed with COVID-19. The data extracted will include demographics, clinical, therapeutic and survival data of cancer patients receiving active cancer therapy and diagnosed with COVID-19, with the hope that this information will be used to determine effective therapies for these patients. This project has passed the development and testing phase and ethical clearance has been received from the UCT HREC. Well done to Dr Zainab Mohamed, the Oncology and CRI teams for this joint project.

Upcoming events

World Ovarian Cancer Coalition event

The global incidence of ovarian cancer is predicted to increase by almost 50% by 2050. The wide chasm between outcomes in higher and lower income settings are likely to increase. What can we do to prevent this from happening? This is the key question behind the Making Ovarian Cancer a Global Priority virtual event hosted by the [World Ovarian Cancer Coalition](#) and chaired by BBC World Service "Health Check" presenter Claudia Hammond. This 90-minute interactive event will bring together a global panel of patient advocacy and clinical experts to discuss ways the global ovarian cancer community, including patient advocacy organizations, can address the worrying gap. Attendees of the event will have the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. Attendance is free, but [registration](#) is required. This event will take place on the 22 of October 2020. Please do sign up and encourage colleagues to participate.

Training opportunities

[NCI's Cancer Research Training Travel Awards for LMIC Investigators](#)

NCI's Center for Global Health (CGH), in collaboration with other NCI divisions, supports collaborative research between U.S. investigators and investigators in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to expand capacity in performing high-quality cancer research in LMICs. To complement and/or enhance these efforts, CGH, in partnership with CRDF Global, launched the Cancer Research Training Travel Awards for LMIC Investigators. The travel awards are intended to facilitate and increase participation in cancer research training opportunities for LMIC investigators/trainees who seek to conduct high-quality and context-appropriate research in their home institutions. Organizers of scientific meetings (conferences, workshops and/or courses) that offer research competence and skill development opportunities with a high potential to improve biomedical, behavioural or clinical cancer research are encouraged to apply.

Application deadline: Friday, 30 October, 2020

[International Agency for Research on Cancer \(IARC\) Postdoctoral Fellowships](#)

The call for applications for IARC Postdoctoral Fellowships in 2021–2023 is now open. For more than 50 years, the IARC Fellowship Programme has trained more than 600 rigorously selected early career scientists from more than 80 countries. For this call, only early career scientists from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are eligible to apply.

Application deadline: Monday, 30 November 2020.

Farewell to Linda Mbuthini

This month we bid a sad farewell to Linda Mbuthini. Linda has been instrumental in developing and supporting cancer databases at both Groote Schuur and Red Cross Children's Hospital. Linda thank you for your hard work. We will miss your excellent support, enthusiasm and friendly manner. We wish you every success with your new job.



For details on events visit [CRI website](#) and [Twitter page](#)

Recent Cancer Publications

1. McGuire JK, Viljoen G, Rocke J, Fitzpatrick S, Dalvie S, Fagan JJ. Does thyroid gland preservation affect local control and disease-free survival in patients with laryngeal squamous cell carcinoma undergoing primary total laryngectomy? *Laryngoscope* 2020 Jun;130(6):1465-9
<https://doi.org/10.1002/lary.28235>
2. Fagan JJ, Wetter J, Otiti J, Aswani J, Konney A, Diom ES, Baidoo K, Onakoya PA, Mugabo RM, Noah P, Mashamba V, Kundiona I, Macharia C, Garba M, Biadgelign MG, Bogale M, Twier K, Faniriko F, Melesse GB, Shrimie MG. Is AJCC/UICC staging still appropriate for head and neck cancers in developing countries? *Oto Open* 2020
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2473974X20938313>
3. Goncalves N, Lubbe, DE. Transorbital Endoscopic Surgery for Sphenoid Wing Meningioma: Long-term Outcomes & Surgical Technique. *J Neurol Surg B Skull Base* 2020 DOI: 10.1055/s-0040-1713854 Aug 2020 Thieme
<https://www.thiemeconnect.com/products/ejournals/abstract/10.1055/s-0040-1713854>
4. Viljoen G, Viljoen N, Bolding E, Fagan JJ. Fine needle aspiration cytology of head and neck masses: Is ultrasound guidance routinely warranted? *S Afr Med J* 2020;110(8):713-4. DOI:10.7196/SAMJ.2020.v110i8.14898
5. Kamedien MS, Din TF, Lubbe D. Incidence of secondary atrophic rhinitis following endoscopic sinonasal tumour surgery: a retrospective review. *Rhinology Online*, Vol 3: 100 - 105, 2020
<http://doi.org/10.4193/RHINOL/20.034> ISSN: 2589-5613 / ©2020
6. Mohamed L, Chakraborty S, ArulJothi KN, Mabasa L, Sayah K, Costa-Lotufo L V, Jardine A, Prince S (2020) Galenia africana plant extract exhibits cytotoxicity in breast cancer cells by inducing multiple programmed cell death pathways, *Saudi Pharmaceutical Journal*, In press;
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsps.2020.08.004>.
7. Willard K, Laguette M-JN, Rios LAdeS, D'Alton C, Nel M, Prince S, Collins M, September AV (2020) Altered expression of proteoglycan, collagen and growth factor genes in a TGF- β 1 stimulated genetic risk model for musculoskeletal soft tissue injuries, *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, 23, 695;
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsams.2020.02.007>.
8. Sahn BDB, Peres J, Paula R-T, Santos EA, Branco PC, Anelize B, Kimani S, Moreira EA, Renata B-A, Claire B, Mlaza M, Jimenez PC, Lopes NP, Machado-Santelli GM, Prince S, Costa-Lotufo LV (2020) Targeting the oncogenic TBX2 transcription factor with chromomycins, *Frontiers in Chemistry*, 8, 110;
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fchem.2020.00110>
9. Higgins G, Peres J, Abdalrahman T, Zaman MH, Lang D, Prince S, Franz T (2020) Cytoskeletal Tubulin Competes with Actin to Increase Deformability of Metastatic Melanoma Cells, *Experimental Cell Research* doi: 10.1016/j.yexcr.2020.112154.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.yexcr.2020.112154>
10. Biteghe, F., Mungra, N., Chalomie, N., Ndong, J. C., Engohang-Ndong, J., Vignaux, G., Padayachee, E., Naran, K., & Barth, S. (2020). Advances in epidermal growth factor receptor specific immunotherapy: lessons to be learned from armed antibodies. *Oncotarget*, 11(38), 3531–3557.
<https://doi.org/10.18632/oncotarget.27730>
11. Harries, J., Constant, D., Cairncross, L., & Moodley, J. Contraceptive needs and fertility intentions of women with breast cancer in Cape Town, South Africa: a qualitative study. *BMC Women's Health* 20, 224 (2020).
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-020-01094-3>.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-020-01094-3>.
12. Pitcher S, Fakie N, Adams T, Denny L, Moodley J. Sexuality post gynaecological cancer treatment: a qualitative study with South African women. *BMJ Open*. 2020 Sep 23;10(9):e038421. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2020-038421. PMID: 32967884; PMCID: PMC7513640
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-038421>

13. Reid F, Bhatla N, Oza AM, Blank SV, Cohen R, Adams T, et al. The World Ovarian Cancer Coalition Every Woman Study: identifying challenges and opportunities to improve survival and quality of life. *International Journal of Gynecologic Cancer*. 2020: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/ijgc-2019-000983>
14. Antel K, Louw VJ, Maartens G, Oosthuizen J, Verburgh E. Diagnosing lymphoma in the shadow of an epidemic: lessons learned from the diagnostic challenges posed by the dual tuberculosis and HIV epidemics. *Leuk Lymphoma*. 2020 Sep 13;1-5 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10428194.2020.18150>
15. Mehanna H, Hardman JC, Shenson JA, Abou-Foul AK, Topf MC, AlFalasi M, Chan JYK, Chaturvedi P, Chow VLY, Dietz A, Fagan JJ, Godballe C, Golusiński W, Homma A, Hosal S, Iyer NG, Kerawala C, Koh YW, Konney A, Kowalski LP, Kraus D, Kuriakose MA, Kyrodimos E, Lai SY, Leemans CR, Lennon P, Licitra L, Lou PJ, Lyons B, Mirghani H, Nichols AC, Paleri V, Panizza BJ, Parente Arias P, Patel MR, Piazza C, Rischin D, Sanabria A, Takes RP, Thomson DJ, Uppaluri R, Wang Y, Yom SS, Zhu YM, Porceddu SV, de Almeida JR, Simon C, Holsinger FC. Recommendations for head and neck surgical oncology practice in a setting of acute severe resource constraint during the COVID-19 pandemic: an international consensus. *Lancet Oncol*. 2020 Jul;21(7):e350-e359. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1470-2045\(20\)30334-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1470-2045(20)30334-x)
16. de Souza Rios LA, Cloete B, Mowla S. Activation-induced cytidine deaminase: in sickness and in health. *Journal of Cancer Research and Clinical Oncology* 2020 Nov;146(11):2721-2730 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00432-020-03348>

Please send any cancer-related news, events, publications and conference information for the period Oct-Dec 2020 for inclusion in our next quarterly newsletter to:

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