

Welcome to the fourth CRI quarterly newsletter for 2021.

Our quarterly newsletters showcase the many cancer-related research activities in the Faculty of Health Sciences to research colleagues, clinicians, funders and the public. Previous editions of the newsletter are published on the [CRI website](#).

It was amazing seeing the many accomplishments of colleagues within our UCT oncology community in 2021, in spite of the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We wish everyone an even more successful and fulfilling 2022.

News

- Congratulations to Professor Lynette Denny who received the **Order of the Baobab (Silver) award** from President Cyril Ramaphosa at an investiture ceremony hosted by the presidency on 18 November. The Order of the Baobab is awarded to South African citizens for distinguished service in the fields of: business and the economy; science, medicine, and for technological innovation; and community service. The National Order recognises Prof Denny’s work as a leading researcher in prevention and early diagnosis of cervical cancer.



See [here](#) for more details, including link to Prof Denny’s recent interview by Refiloe Mpakanyane of FM Radio 702,

- Prof Sharon Prince received the **NRF’s Hamilton Naki Award** in November 2021. This award honours individuals for achieving world-class research performance despite considerable challenges.
- Prof Jennifer Moodley has been appointed as a Commissioner for the Lancet Commission on Women and Cancer and as a Scientific Advisor to the Lancet Commission on Cancer Health and Health Systems.
- The article entitled Sub-Saharan Africa in desperate need of clinical haematologists, written by Niemah Davids based on discussions with Prof Vernon Louw and published on the UCT website, has won an **International Association of Business Communicators Africa Region Silver Quill award**. This article highlights the scarcity of clinical haematologists in Sub-Saharan Africa and the critical need for training medical professionals to ensure better treatment of patients with blood and bone marrow disorders, including malignancies. The article can be found [here](#).

Grants awards

- Prof Moodley (UCT) and Prof Walter (Queen Mary University of London) have been awarded a four-year NIHR Global Health Research Group grant for a multi-country research project titled “Advancing Early Diagnosis of Cancer in Southern Africa - the African aWAREness of CANcer and Early Diagnosis (AWACAN-ED) project”. UCT research team members include Prof John Ataguba, Dr Tasleem Ras and Dr Chukwudi Nnaji. Working closely with colleagues at the University of Zimbabwe and Queen Mary University of London, as well as with collaborators across participating research sites and health facilities in South Africa and Zimbabwe the group will explore innovative approaches to advancing early diagnosis of breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer in Southern Africa. Groote Schuur Hospital collaborators include Dr Zainab Mohamed (Dept. of Oncology); Dr Nomonde Mbatani (Dept. of Gynaecology); Dr Francoise Malherbe and Dr Claire Warden (both from the Dept. of Surgery).
- Associate Prof Shaheen Mowla has received a three-year NRF Competitive Support for Unrated Researchers (CSUR) grant. This will provide funding support for her research project titled: “Assessment of therapeutic effects of Traditional Herbal medicine *Dodonaea viscosa* on cancers of high prevalence among HIV-infected people.”
- A/Prof Estelle Verburgh is the recipient of a three-year grant from the Cancer association of South Africa (CANSAs) for research on improving the

pathway to timely and accurate lymphoma diagnosis in South Africa.

- Prof Vernon Louw and A/Prof Estelle Verburgh are the recipients of the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation Collaboration for Multiple Myeloma grant. This grant will enable collaboration between Institutes across Southern Africa with the aim of improving multiple myeloma patient care.

Student/trainee news

- The Division of Clinical Haematology UCT has appointed three new trainees in Clinical Haematology, Dr Siphwe Baloyi, Dr Jonathan Oxley Oxland and Dr Ashraf Hammad. Two of these posts were made possible through the Division's fellowship funding from the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation and Takeda.
- Aaliyah Saferdien, a PhD student of Associate Prof Shaheen Mowla's, received the "Most Creative Poster" award at the HUB-iBMS-Pathology (HiP) Joint Research Symposium which took place in December 2021.
- Miss Lillian Andera, a PhD candidate in the Division of Clinical Haematology, presented her work at the HUB-iBMS-Pathology (HiP) Joint Research Symposium in December. Her presentation was entitled: Temporal Trends in HIV-associated Lymphoma in Cape Town, South Africa.
- Elochukwu Ezenwankwo has received the Global Health Equity Scholar award from African Organisation for Research and Training in Cancer (AORTIC). The award recognises significant contributions to global health equity and cancer health disparities research in Africa by early career researchers and scholars.

Graduation news

- Dr Kudakwashe Simba has passed his Clinical Haematology exams, allowing him to graduate with an MPhil and practice as a Clinical Haematologist.
- Dr Cari van Schalkwyk graduated with her PhD in December. Dissertation title: Modelling the impact of prevention strategies on cervical cancer incidence in South Africa. Supervisors: Associate Prof Leigh Johnson. And Prof Jennifer Moodley.
- The UCT Karl Storz Fellowship Programme has recently graduated its 15th Fellow in Advanced Head and Neck Surgery. He is Dr Andy Randriamalala from Madagascar. Having spent 1 year on the fellowship, he returns to Madagascar as one of the country's only 2 head and neck surgeons.

Congratulations to them!



L-R: Ms Marion Burges of Karl Storz, Dr Andry Randriamala, and Prof Johannes Fagan of UCT

Recent events

Postgraduate Cancer Research Initiative (PG CRI) 3-minute Thesis Competition 2021

Our Postgraduate Cancer Research Initiative (PG CRI) held another successful 3-minute competition 19 October 2021. The competition is a platform for postgraduate students to showcase their cancer-related thesis using 1 non-animated slide and non-scientific language to explain their research topic or proposal to a general audience. We had prizes for the best presentations in the Masters and PhD categories:

Research topic	Prize winner
Production of targeted therapy for improved brain cancer diagnosis and treatment	Grace Mayuni (MSc) Supervisor - Prof Dr Stefan Barth
Marine compounds: A source of targeted anti-cancer drugs	Claire Bellis (PhD) Supervisor - Prof Sharon Prince
Repurposing drugs that target the interaction between HPV and TBX3 to treat cervical cancer	Saif Feroz Khan (PhD) Supervisor - Prof Sharon Prince

SAMRC and UCT Gynaecological Cancer Research Centre (GCRC) 2021 Research Indaba

The South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and UCT Gynaecological Cancer Research Centre (GCRC) successfully hosted the 2021 Research Indaba on 17 November 2021. The event was themed: 'Pathways to the elimination of cervical cancer'.



See more details on the event [here](#).

Sarcoma Outreach in Namibia

Dr Thomas Hilton and team travelled to Namibia on a Sarcoma outreach in December 2021 and performed a clinic of 20 cases and a theatre list of 7 cases.



Dr Hilton and team

Lymphoma meeting series

Through its weekly virtual Haematology Deep Dive academic meeting for education and development of national collaborations, the Division of Clinical Haematology UCT has recently hosted meetings on Hodgkin Lymphoma, Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma and Peripheral T cell Lymphoma. Presentations have been by speakers from both national and international academic centres including UCT, Wits University, UKZN and the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Centre.

New GCRC research site in Mthatha

The South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and UCT Gynaecological Cancer Research Centre (GCRC) has established a new research site at the Nelson Mandela Academic Hospital (NMAH) in Mthatha. The initial site feasibility visit to Mthatha was done in 2019. However, due to COVID 19 further activities were delayed. Ethics approvals from UCT HREC and the Ethics Committee of NMAH and WSU were gained at end of 2020 and early 2021. GCRC was finally granted permission to establish an office at NMAH Oncology Unit

in late September 2021. The first patient data was entered on the 20th of September and to date 47 patients have been enrolled.

Upcoming events

World Cancer Day 2022 – 4 February

The World Cancer Day is commemorated every 4 February as a global initiative led by the [Union for International Cancer Control](#) (UICC). The overarching aim is to raise worldwide cancer awareness, improving education and catalysing personal, collective and government action, towards a world where millions of preventable cancer deaths are saved and access to life-saving cancer treatment and care is equal for all. This year's World Cancer Day's theme, 'Close the care gap'. To learn more about World Cancer Day, please visit the [World Cancer Day website](#).

Please let us know if you are planning any World Cancer Day events. The CRI is planning a virtual World Cancer Day virtual event again this year, similar to last year's (see highlight of the 2021 event [here](#)). We will be calling for contributions soon.

Training and Funding opportunities

- **Training:** The African Cancer STARS Training programme (funded by NCI grant D43-CA260640). This program provides mentored training for principal investigators and project managers who are developing cancer research careers in Sub-Saharan Africa.
Deadline: 4 February 2022, see more details on the programme's [website](#).
- **Training:** Free e-learning module on COVID-19 and Cancer Screening offered by International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). More details on the module and how to enrol can be found [here](#).

Recent Cancer Publications

1. Adams TS, Rogers LJ, Cuello MA. Cancer of the vagina: 2021 update. *Int J Gynaecol Obstet*. 2021 Oct;155 Suppl 1:19-27. DOI: 10.1002/ijgo.13867.
2. Broutet N, Jeronimo J, Kumar S, Almonte M, Murillo R, Huy NVQ, Denny L, Kapambwe S, Bhatla N, Sebitloane M, Zhao F, Gravitt P, Adsul P, Rangaraj A, Dalal S, Newman M, Chowdhury R, Church K, Nakisige C, Diop M, Parham G, Thomson KA, Basu P, Steyn P. Implementation research to accelerate scale-up of national screen and treat strategies towards the elimination of cervical cancer. *Prev Med*. 2021 Dec 8:106906. DOI: 10.1016/j.ypmed.2021.106906.
3. Carse S, Lang D, Katz AA, Schäfer G. Exogenous Vimentin Supplementation Transiently Affects

- Early Steps during HPV16 Pseudovirus Infection. *Viruses*. 2021 Dec 10;13(12):2471. DOI: 10.3390/v13122471.
4. Chiesa-Estomba CM, Calvo-Henriquez C, Goncalves N, Lechien JR, Sistiaga-Suarez JA, Mayo-Yanez M, Gonzalez-Garcia JA, Nandhan R, Martinez F, Ayad T. Patterns of practice regarding surgical site infection prevention in head & neck surgery: An international survey. *Acta Otorrinolaringológica Española*. DOI: 10.1016/j.otorri.2021.06.004
 5. Chiesa-Estomba CM, Graña M, Medela A, Sistiaga-Suarez JA, Lechien JR, Calvo-Henriquez C, Mayo-Yañez M, Vaira LA, Grammatica A, Cammaroto G, Ayad T, Fagan JJ. Machine learning algorithms as a computer assisted decision tool for oral cancer prognosis and management decisions: A systematic review. *ORL (In press)*
 6. COVID Surg Collaborative (Co-authors include J Fagan). Effect of COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns on planned cancer surgery for 15 tumour types in 61 countries: an international, prospective, cohort study. *Lancet Oncol*. 2021 Nov;22(11):1507-17. DOI: 10.1016/S1470-2045(21)00493-9.
 7. Ezenwankwo EF, Ogbodo VE, Alom GO, Nwadiilibe IB, Ofodum CM, Nwankwo CA, Okigbo CC, Omeje CA, Onyebuchi SJ, Oladoyimbo CA, Ezeani A, Akin-Odanye EO, Ogunsanya M. Behavioural oncology research in Africa: Lessons from the last two decades and key considerations moving forward. *Eur J Cancer Care (Engl)*. 2021 Dec 21:e13545. DOI: 10.1111/ecc.13545.
 8. Fagan JJ, Otiti J, Onakoya PA, Diom E, Konney A, Gebeyehu M, Aswani J, Baidoo K, Koch WM. AfHNS Fellowship: A model to improve access to head and neck cancer care in Africa and Developing Countries. *Head & Neck* 2021;1–6. DOI: 10.1002/hed.26770
 9. Gqada KJ, Kotze U, Soldati V, Kloppers C, Krige J, Jonas E. Translation and linguistic validation of the EORTC QLQ-PAN26 questionnaire for assessment of health-related quality of life in patients with pancreatic cancer and chronic pancreatitis into isiXhosa and Afrikaans. *S Afr J Surg*. 2021 Dec;59(4):153-156.
 10. Mehanna H, Hardman JC, Shenson JA, Abou-Foul AK, Topf MC, Al Falasi 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. DOI: 10.1016/S1470-2045(20)30334-X.
 11. Olawaiye AB, Cuello MA, Rogers LJ. Cancer of the vulva: 2021 update. *Int J Gynaecol Obstet*. 2021 Oct;155 Suppl 1:7-18. DOI: 10.1002/ijgo.13881.
 12. Oodit R, Constant DA, Maree F, Lorrimer I, Dalwai EK, Moodley J. Colorectal surgical outcomes following implementation of an enhanced recovery after surgery programme in Cape Town. *S Afr J Surg*. 2021 Dec;59(4):157-163.
 13. Shaw B, Wood E, McQuilten Z, Callum J, Romon I, Sanroma P, Garcia D, Crispin PJ, Castilho L, Kutner JM, Yokoyama APH, Bravo A, Sanchez EF, Maldonado Silva K, Arora S, Radhakrishnan N, Dua S, Ziman A, Wikman A, Lubenow N, Bodecker Zingmark L, Louw VJ, Loebenberg P, Sidhu D, Redfern T, Nahirniak S, Dunbar N. International Forum on Home-Based Blood Transfusion: Summary. *Vox Sang*. 2021 Oct 25. doi: 10.1111/vox.13200. Epub ahead of print.
 14. Shaw B, Wood E, McQuilten Z, Callum J, Romon I, Sanroma P, Garcia D, Crispin P, Castilho L, Kutner JM, Yokoyama APH, Bravo A, Sanchez EF, Silva KM, Arora S, Radhakrishnan N, Dua S, Ziman A, Wikman A, Lubenow N, Zingmark LB, Louw V, Loebenberg P, Sidhu D, Redfern T, Nahirniak S, Dunbar N. *International Forum on Home-Based Blood Transfusion: Responses*. *Vox Sang*. 2021 Oct 25. doi: 10.1111/vox.13199. Epub ahead of print.
 15. Willmer T, Damerell V, Smyly S, Sims D, Du Toit M, Ncube S, Sinkala M, Govender D, Sturrock E, Blackburn JM, Prince S. Targeting the oncogenic TBX3:nucleolin complex to treat multiple sarcoma subtypes. *Am J Cancer Res*. 2021 Nov 15;11(11):5680-5700.

Please send any cancer-related news, events, publications and conference information for the period January - March 2022 for inclusion in our next quarterly newsletter to:

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