



CRI QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER:

January – March 2022

Welcome to the first CRI newsletter for 2022

Our quarterly newsletters highlight the many cancer-related research activities in the Faculty of Health Sciences. In this edition, we feature the various advocacy activities that staff undertook to mark World Cancer Day. Previous editions of the newsletter are published on the [CRI website](#).

World Cancer Day 2022

World Cancer Day was initiated to stimulate and accelerate collective actions between people, communities, organizations, industries, researchers, clinicians, and governments to respond to the increasing burden of cancer. Activities, events, and programmes are organized around a central theme every 4th of February. Recognizing the real-world challenges that preclude minority, marginalized and underserved individuals and communities from accessing cancer services and the need to dismantle systemic and structural barriers driving health and care disparities, the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) fittingly chose the theme, "Close the Care Gap," to mark 2022 World Cancer Day. Our UCT post-graduate Cancer Research Initiative (PG CRI) Group distributed World Cancer Day posters and flyers to research teams to support the various activities and events for this year's World Cancer Day. Throughout the day, we tweeted the various Faculty activities (on our Twitter handle, @UctCri).

Closing the care gap
#WorldCancerDay



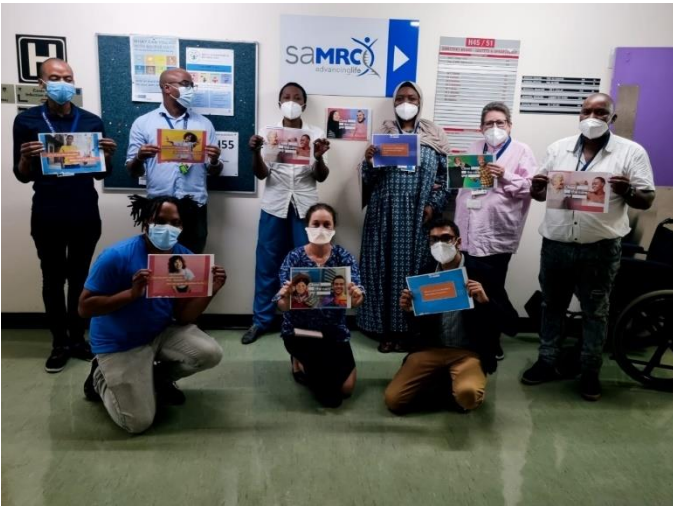
We are delighted to share some of the Faculty activities below.



SAMRC/UCT Gynaecological Cancer Research Centre screening the powerful and informative documentary film: "Conquering Cancer." The documentary by Sue Collins was made available by Moonshine Agency, Australia.

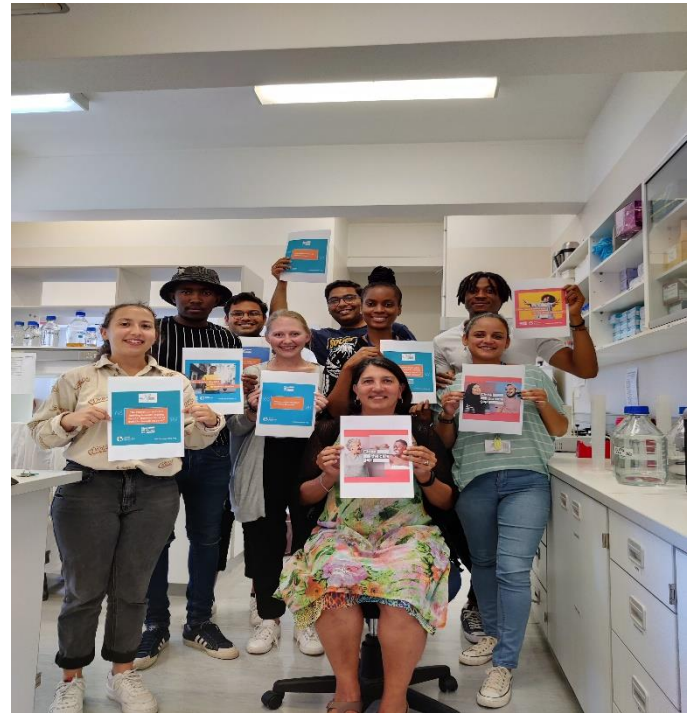
The "Conquering Cancer" film was screened as part of a hybrid meeting held by the **SAMRC/UCT Gynaecological Cancer Research Centre** on Friday 11th February to mark World Cancer Day. The audience ranged from clinicians, gynaecologists, oncologists, interns, and students from the Dept of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, UCT/GSH, basic scientists with interest in HPV research, pathologists, immunologists, researchers, and cancer survivors, as well as representatives from Cancer Advocacy groups. Colleagues and delegates attended from other regions and institutions within South Africa, as well neighbouring countries (Dept Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Repamika Hospital, Congo, and University of Ilorin, Nigeria, and University of Lagos, Nigeria)





The Dept. of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and SAMRC/UCT Gynaecological Cancer Research Team advocating to close care gaps in cancer care on 4th February.

Part of the Department's events included Radio presentations by Drs Nomonde Mbatani and Nwabisa Giyose on Radio SAFM and Umhlobo Wenene Radio, respectively, on cervical cancer and survivorship of women with gynaecological cancers.



Students and staff from **The Prince cancer laboratory** on World Cancer Day. The laboratory, based in the Department of Human Biology, unravels the molecular mechanisms that drive several cancers and tests potential novel therapeutics to treat them.



The **UCT Global Surgery Advocacy team** holding a breast and cervical cancer workshop at Gugulethu for Community Health Works to mark World Cancer Day 2022.



Students and staff from **FHS Cancer Survivorship Research Team**. The team explores, among many, the association between biomarkers of inflammation and angiogenesis with shoulder pain and disability and latent effects of therapies in breast cancer survivors.



Our students form a crucial part of what we do at CRI. Here is Victoria Damerell, PhD candidate and key leader of the CRI post-graduate group. Victoria, currently abroad, joined our FHS World Cancer Day celebrations.

Join the PGCRI Group

PGCRI Membership Update

The Postgraduate Group of the Cancer Research Initiative (PGCRI) is a peer mentorship programme that aims to build interdisciplinary collaborations and develop new skills. Due to the circumstances over the last 2 years, the Group has not been able to host "in-person" events. This year the Group aims to host in-person, hybrid, and online meetings to support and facilitate interactions between post-graduate students within the cancer field on our campus. As such, the PG CRI Group is updating their student mailing list. We encourage all post-graduate students to join the team. Visit [here](#) to sign up for the PGCRI mailing list.

Recent Events

Prince Lab CANSA Shavathon 2022

The objective of the annual Prince Lab CANSA Shavathon is to raise funds for the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA), to spread awareness for cancer, and encourage participation from students, staff, and the greater community to shave/spray their hair in solidarity with people with cancer and the people close to them. A PhD student, Claire Bellis, and an MSc student, Carly Burmeister, in the Prince lab led the project this year. In addition to raising R3550 for CANSA, the event brought together various research groups, students, and staff to stand in solidarity with those affected by cancer. Participation was encouraged through newsletters,

mailing lists, posters, and social media. The event also extended to families and friends of participants outside of UCT. We hope attendees left having built a connection with fellow volunteers and peers within the Faculty. CANSA has supported our cancer researchers over many years through numerous research grants.



Students and staff at the Prince Lab CANSA SHAVATON 2022

The annual Paediatric Brain Tumour Workshop

The annual Paediatric brain tumour workshop endorsed by the South African children's cancer study group (SACCSG) (<https://www.sacmsg.co.za/>), South African society of clinical and radiation oncology (SASCO) (<https://sascro.org/>) and the Society of Neuro-Oncology in Sub-Saharan Africa (SNOSSA) (<https://snossa.org/>) was held on 3rd and 4th of December 2021 at the University of Cape Town. The event was hosted by the paediatric neuro-oncology team at Groote Schuur Hospital (GSH) and Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital (RCWMCH). The workshop aimed to improve the management of children with brain tumours in South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. The hybrid event featured talks from five international speakers and fourteen local experts across neurosurgery, radiation oncology, paediatric oncology, palliative care, associated and allied health professionals, and advocacy. It also featured a symposium on using gamma knife in radiosurgery and stereotactic body radiotherapy (SBRT). The PBTW meeting was held in the same week as the initiation of the Access to Care Cape Town Paediatric radiotherapy practical course and the SNOSSA "First Thursday's" neuro-oncology webinar series, aiming to give participants maximum gain.

Student news

- Victoria Damerell (PhD student, Prince laboratory) received second prize for best oral presentation (PhD category) at the 27th South African Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (SASBMB) Congress in January 2022.
- Claire Bellis (PhD Student in the Prince laboratory.) was awarded 1st prize for most creative oral presentation and 2nd prize for best oral presentation at the joint HiP Symposium (hosted by the UCT Departments of Human Biology, Integrative Biomedical Sciences, and Pathology).
- Stephanie Ncube (PhD Student, Prince laboratory) received 1st prize for best PhD oral presentation at the 2021 Biomedical Research & Innovation Platform (BRIP) Symposium (SA MRC). Ms Stephanie Ncube has also been awarded the prestigious Margaret McNamara Education Grant (formerly known as MMMF). The nonprofit, public charity founded in 1981 awards a yearly education grant to exceptional women from developing countries. The organization draws inspiration from Margaret McNamara and her vision of education and gender equality.
- Dr Mohsin Khan has been awarded the FHS Postdoctoral Research fellowship in cancer research and will be joining the Prince Laboratory in 2022.
- Ms Carly Burmeister (The Prince Laboratory) has been awarded two prestigious fellowships, the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust and Harry Crossley Master's scholarships. The Oppenheimer Memorial Trust graduate study scholarships are awarded to exceptional candidates pursuing post-graduate degrees and to produce individuals who portray excellent leadership qualities as well as strong social justice, who will later play important roles in government, business, civil society, and industry in South Africa and Africa as a whole.
- Mr Karabo Serala and Mr Mihlali Vuyo Mlaza (Prince laboratory) are recipients of the prestigious Accelerated Transformation of the Academic Programme (ATAP). This is an initiative administered by the University of Cape Town's transformation office that aims to attract and fast-track academically excelling black South African students who have a keen interest in pursuing academic careers at UCT or other institutions.

Graduation news

- Ms Talia Gabay (Hons student) graduated with first class in April 2022. Her research entitled ***Transcriptional Activation of the Cervical Cancer promoting factor TBX3 by c-Myc*** was co-supervised with Dr Alexis Mufweba)
- Ms Michelle du Toit (MSc student) graduated with distinction in December 2021. Her MSc thesis title was

"The role of nucleolin in transforming mesenchymal stem cells into sarcoma subtypes."

- Ms Jessica Burns (MSc student) (co-supervised with Prof Stefan Weiss, University of Witwatersrand) graduated in December 2021. Her work was titled ***"Investigating the possible role of LRP/LR in the pathogenesis of Parkinson's disease and cancer."***
- Ms Cristine Araujo de Pontes (MSc student) (co-supervised with Prof Leticia Costa-Lotufo, University of São Paulo, Brazil) graduated in December 2021.
- Dr Alexis Mufweba' PhD entitled ***"The identification and characterization of novel breast cancer therapeutics"*** was granted in December 2021
- Dr Ana Popovic (PhD) graduated in December 2021 (Title: ***An Investigation into the Phenotypic Switching of Dermal Fibroblasts into Cancer-Associated Fibroblasts in the Melanoma Tumour Microenvironment;*** co-supervised by Dr S Tartare-Deckert, University of Cote d'azur, Nice, France)

Upcoming events

"First Thursdays" Neuro-Oncology Webinar Series

The Society of neuro-oncology in Sub-Saharan Africa (SNOSSA) (<https://snossa.org/>) is inviting students, researchers, and the public to the "First Thursdays" neuro-oncology webinar series- Continuing Medical Education in all Aspects of Neuro-Oncology. This series of multi-disciplinary INTERACTIVE webinars features various aspects of neuro-oncology and is presented by speakers and professionals from across the globe in neurosurgery, clinical and paediatric oncology, pathology, neuroradiology, supportive care & advocacy. Full programme detail can be found at: <https://snossa.org/>

Recent Cancer Publications

1. Damerell V, Ambele MA, Salisbury S, Neumann-Mufweba A, Durandt C, Pepper MS, Prince S. The c-Myc/TBX3 Axis Promotes Cellular Transformation of Sarcoma-Initiating Cells. *Frontiers in oncology*. 2021;11:801691
2. Ezenwankwo EF, Motsoeneng P, Atterbury EM, Albertus Y, Lambert EV, Shamley D. Plausible conditions and mechanisms for increasing physical activity behavior in men with prostate cancer using patient education interventions: sequential explanatory mixed studies synthesis. *Supportive Care in Cancer*. 2022 Jan 21:1-7.
3. Ezenwankwo EF, Nnate DA, Usoro GD, Onyeso CP, Aniето IB, Ibeneme SC, Albertus Y, Lambert VE, Ezeukwu AO, Abaraogu UO, Shamley D. A scoping review examining the integration of exercise services

- in clinical oncology settings. BMC health services research. 2022 Dec;22(1):1-5.
4. Farrant L, Harding R, Anderson D, Greeff L, Kassanje R, Krause R, Mohamed Z, Parkes J, Gwyther L. Symptom prevalence and burden, and the risk of depression among patients with advanced cancer attending two South African oncology units. *ecancermedicalsecience*. 2022;16.
 5. Is Clinical Research Serving the Needs of the Global Cancer Burden? An analysis of contemporary global radiotherapy randomised controlled trials. Joanna Dodkins, Wilma Hopman, John Connor Wells, Yolande Lievens, R.A. Malik, C.S. Pramesh, Bishal Gyawali, Nazik Hammad, Deborah Mikherji, Richard Sullivan, Jeannette Parkes, Christopher Booth, Ajay Aggarwal. *Int J Onc Biol Physics*. Available online on 11 February 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijrobp.2022.01.053>
 6. Johnson LG, Saidu R, Svanholm-Barrie C, Boa R, Moodley J, Tergas A, Persing D, Campbell SA, Tsai WY, Wright TC, Denny L. Clinical utility of reflex testing with cancer biomarkers to improve diagnostic accuracy of primary Human Papillomavirus screening. *Cancer Epidemiology and Prevention Biomarkers*. 2022 Jan 1.
 7. Neumann-Mufweba A, Kimani S, Khan SF, Chibale K, Prince S. The diaryl-imidazopyridazine anti-plasmodial compound, MMV652103, exhibits anti-breast cancer activity. *EXCLI, Experimental and Clinical Sciences*. 2022. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.17179/excli2021-4323>
 8. Nnaji CA, Ezenwankwo EF, Kuodi P, Walter FM, Moodley J. Timeliness of diagnosis of breast and cervical cancers and associated factors in low-income and middle-income countries: a scoping review. *BMJ Open*. 2022 Feb 1;12(2):e057685.
 9. Serala K, Steenkamp P, Mampuru L, Prince S, Poopedi K, Mbazima V. In vitro antimetastatic activity of *Momordica balsamina* crude acetone extract in HT-29 human colon cancer cells. *Environmental Toxicology*. 2021 Nov;36(11):2196-205.
 10. Welsh A, Mbaba M, Prince S, Smith GS. Synthesis, molecular modeling and preliminary anticancer evaluation of 2-ferrocenylbenzimidazole metallofragments. *Journal of Molecular Structure*. 2021 Dec 15;1246:131122.

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

Elochukwu Ezenwankwo,

Email: EZNELO001i@myuct.ac.za