

Quick Update:

- Farewell to the COGNO Management Committee from Anna Nowak
- 14th COGNO Annual Scientific Meeting



COGNO

COOPERATIVE TRIALS GROUP
FOR NEURO-ONCOLOGY

Member Newsletter

Issue 41

Summer 2022

Message from our Chair

Dear COGNO member

What a tremendous year 2022 has been for the COGNO network!



My thanks again to the 2022 COGNO ASM Co-Convenors Associate Professor Benjamin Chua and Dr Hamish Alexander for convening such an excellent meeting with a strong scientific program accentuated by high quality international and local speakers. The co-scheduling with ABCARA and the BTAA Patient Education and Information Forum made for a robust and well-rounded program. It was certainly wonderful to have an in-person meeting after several years of online interactions. My congratulations go to all of the Award winners outlined further here in this newsletter.

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I would also like to acknowledge again the stellar achievements of my predecessor, Professor Anna Nowak, for her substantial contribution to both neuro-oncology and mesothelioma care and research. We wish Anna all the best in her next career steps and know that she will continue to be a trail-blazer in her new sphere of influence through her role as DVCR at the University of Western Australia.

As I reflect on the year that is drawing to a close, I continue to be incredibly proud of what the COGNO network has achieved this year across its full range of activities including national and international trial development, operations, active trial recruitment, competitive grant applications and many committee-specific initiatives. Returning from the Society of Neuro-Oncology ASM in Florida last month, it was gratifying to witness the NUTMEG trial in elderly Glioblastoma led by Professor Mustafa Khasraw and Dr Hao-Wen Sim deliver the trial results. I have every confidence that COGNO continues to position itself strongly both nationally and on the global stage to ensure we make a substantial contribution to the international neuro-oncology community. Even as we achieve this, we still ensure that we keep every person, every carer and every community at the centre of our collective efforts.

2023 is shaping up to be a particularly exciting year for COGNO trials activity, with both the LUMOS2 umbrella interventional trial in recurrent lower grade glioma and the PICCOG trial set to open in the coming months. In addition, the phase 3 EORTC-led PersoMed-1 study in AYA medulloblastoma, will be activated and commence Australian recruitment, with several German sites open and the first global patient already on study. The MAGMA trial in adult Glioblastoma continues to recruit strongly and we look actively to next steps to extend this platform.

In closing, I wish to express my sincere thanks to the core COGNO team especially our Executive Officer Ms Jenny Chow, Yi Feng and Danielle Massey, all the trials teams and staff at the NHMRC CTC who have collectively gone "above and beyond" this year in seeing COGNO reach for its Mission. Special acknowledgement to the leadership and support of COGNO Deputy Chair Associate Professor Rosie Harrup, the COGNO Management Committee and Committee Chairs for demonstrating outstanding leadership and commitment. They are truly an amazing team.

I wish all COGNO members a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and a safe and relaxing break.

With best wishes

Associate Professor Eng-Siew Koh
MBBS FRANZCR
Group Chair

FAREWELL TO THE COGNO MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FROM ANNA NOWAK



As a recent past Chair of COGNO, I wanted to let this wonderful community know why I will be disappearing from COGNO activities, including the Management Committee.

This past two years have been a time of enormous change for my career, firstly giving up neuro-oncology clinical practice when accepting the role of Pro Vice Chancellor (Health and Medical Research) at UWA, and this year relinquishing clinical practice entirely to be acting Deputy Vice Chancellor Research (DVCR), again at UWA. These were incredible opportunities for me to stretch beyond my speciality, and then beyond Medicine entirely. I would never have imagined myself hanging out with astrophysicists, chairing an agriculture advisory board, or opening an event on the poetry and music of space! It has been a steep but fulfilling learning curve, and has set a new direction. I have now accepted a 5 year role as UWA DVCR, meaning that I will not be returning to clinical practice.

I am immensely grateful for the opportunities my involvement as an inaugural member of COGNO gave both me, and people with brain tumours at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital (SCGH). I am proud of how many people our neuro-oncology team at Charlies recruited to COGNO clinical trials, and of the team that will continue this work. I will be continuing to discharge my duties as Australian CATNON Chair as the trial continues long term follow up. I am also still committed to peripheral involvement in some of the studies on which I was a CI on hard-won grants. It was a privilege to serve as COGNO Chair, and if the Incorporation of COGNO occurs (pending at time of writing), I know that great things are ahead.

My thanks to Mark Rosenthal for his mentorship, to Eng-Siew Koh for her ongoing leadership of COGNO, to the NHMRC CTC team for their amazing support, and to all my colleagues and friends at COGNO for what we have achieved together.

Kind regards
Anna

14TH COGNO ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING



Congratulations to Co-Convenors, Dr Hamish Alexander and Associate Professor Ben Chua, and the 2022 Organising Committee on a very successful Annual Scientific Meeting. This was the first in-person ASM since 2019 and was a wonderful opportunity for delegates to catch up with colleagues and make new connections, in addition to an excellent program with international speakers Associate Professor Krishna Bhat, Professor Veronica Chiang, Dr Frank Saran and Dr Mark Bilsky.

The ASM was held in conjunction with the BTAA Patient Education and Information Forum, the ABCARA Research Symposium, and COGNO's inaugural Trainee Workshop - all of which were very successful.

As in previous years, there were a number of Awards presented during the ASM, and we congratulate all our Award recipients:

- Most Outstanding Oral Presentation - Associate Professor Georgia Halkett for her abstract "*Determining research priorities for adult primary brain tumours in Australia and New Zealand: A Delphi study*"
- Most Outstanding Poster Presentation - Mr Jan Niclas Skarne for his abstract "*Understanding the roles of ephrin A5 in Glioblastoma and its potential as a therapeutic target*"
- Young Investigator Award - Dr Lucy Gately for her abstract "*BIOBRAIN: Utilising patient-derived organoids for a personalised medicine strategy in glioblastoma*"
- BTAA Lynette Williams Award first Prize - Associate Professor Joanne Shaw for her abstract "*Developing a stepped care model for assessing unmet needs in people diagnosed with high grade glioma: defining criteria for stepped care intervention*"
- BTAA Lynette Williams Award second Prize - Dr Qichen Zhang for her abstract "*Efficacy and Toxicity Profiles of Linear Accelerator-Based Hypofractionated Stereotactic Radiosurgery in the Management of Intact Brain Metastases*"
- Outreach Education Preceptorship - Dr Junie Yu-Yen Khoo, from Malaysia

COGNO thanks our sponsors for their support of this year's Annual Scientific Meeting.



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HUBERT STUERZL MEMORIAL EDUCATIONAL AWARD - REPORT FROM DR ASHRAY GUNJUR



In 2019, as a medical oncology advanced trainee at Austin Health, I had the immense honour of being awarded the MSD Hubert Stuerzl Memorial Educational Award, which allowed me to attend the 2019 Society of Neuro-Oncology (SNO) Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM), as well as more recently the 2022 Cancer Core Europe Summer School in Translational Cancer Research. On reflection, I have no doubt that participating in these has served to enhance my research skills and professional networks and contribute to my training as a clinician-scientist, who will hopefully make contributions to the Australian neuro-oncology field in the future.

The 2019 SNO ASM meeting was one of many firsts for me. It was my first international conference, and first in the United States (being held in Phoenix, Arizona). It was also my first time seeing some 'heroes' of the field in-person (including walking one metre behind Roger Stupp...).

I was stunned by the breadth and depth of clinical and preclinical content the scientific program offered. Though I was then a clinical trainee, I found the preclinical sessions most inspiring, leaving me with the impression that fundamental, sweeping change to clinical practice driven by basic science was possible. This was particularly for diseases like glioblastoma, where unfortunately there has been little change in the standard-of-care for 15 years. Of specific interest to me was the focus on preclinical drug development in glioblastoma.

For example, Professor Stuart Grossman delivered a memorable talk about the 'Adult Brain Tumour Consortium's first workshop on CNS drug delivery', which emphasised the importance of evaluating blood-brain-barrier penetration of investigational products, particularly into non-contrast-enhancing regions of disease (now published in *Neuro Oncol.*). This aligned with my and my group's interest in the quality of preclinical evaluation of novel glioblastoma drugs in the 'Stupp protocol' era. We subsequently conducted a systematic review with a particular focus on the preclinical evidence available at the time of phase 1 trial conduct, finding that only 3/28 investigational drugs had published intracranial pharmacokinetic data. In general, there was overall poor correlation between preclinical and clinical efficacy. We were able to present these findings at SNO 2020 (virtually due to COVID-19), and subsequently publish them in *J Neurooncol.* Beyond informing this one research work, my experience at SNO 2019 gave me a view of the power of bringing together fundamental researchers and clinicians, solidifying my commitment to becoming a clinician-scientist.

As such, after a COVID-delay, in 2021 I moved to Cambridge, UK to begin a computational biology PhD at the Wellcome Sanger Institute, funded by the John Monash Foundation and a CRUK Cambridge Centre Clinical Research Training Fellowship. With COVID restrictions in place, unfortunately a clinical preceptorship was a difficult task to organise, even into early 2022. However, 2022 marked the resumption of the Cancer Core Europe annual summer school, which the CRUK Cambridge Centre is a member of alongside 7 other leading European cancer institutes.

This event brought together cancer researchers and clinician-scientists from neuro-oncology and other cancer streams to network and share knowledge.

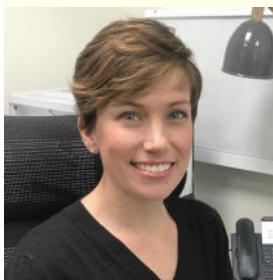
Though the formal talks covered a diverse range of topics (from artificial intelligence in radiology & pathology, to clinical trial development, to fundamental cancer biology), a real highlight was expanding my network to European researchers, particularly other young clinician-scientists who are in the phase of establishing labs.

For example, I plan to visit labs in Germany and Italy whilst based in Cambridge, to see first-hand their research set ups, and learn what I can to bring back to Australia in the future.

I am truly grateful for these opportunities, given to me by the MSD Hubert Stuerzl Memorial Educational Award, and hope I can pay it forward through a productive career as a neuro-oncology clinician-scientist.

Dr Ashray Gunjur

2022 YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARD - REPORT FROM DR LUCY GATELY



A personalised medicine approach has seen significant improvement in outcomes for many solid cancers. Traditionally biomarker-driven, these approaches have utilised therapies targeting a specific genomic driver, often found at higher concentrations or exclusively within the tumour cells. Unfortunately, the same success has not been seen in glioblastoma. This is in part due to the lack of highly accurate predictive biomarkers and available targeted treatment options, as well as the inability to accurately characterize tumoral heterogeneity in classic preclinical models.

The work presented at COGNO this year highlighted the potential utility of patient-derived glioblastoma organoids to enable a novel personalised medicine approach for this devastating disease. BIOBRAIN has established a robust pipeline for patient-derived tumour organoid generation and analysis, with further expansion underway. Using a sample of fresh tumour obtained during standard of care surgery, patient-derived tumour organoids have been established in our laboratory with a 100% success rate. Once established, a portion of these organoids have been dedicated to multi-dimensional drug assays to ascertain the sensitivity of the tumour to each individual agent; multi-omics analysis including WES and transcriptomics to identify novel biomarkers and mechanisms of resistance; and biobanking. With detailed clinical information captured in the BRAIN registry, these data can be correlated with responses in the individual patient, paving the way for clinical trials informed by tumour organoid response.

I would like to thank the COGNO team for this award, as well as the dedicated BIOBRAIN team for their ongoing efforts and support.

Dr Lucy Gately

2022 COGNO EDUCATIONAL PRECEPTORSHIP AWARD - REPORT FROM DR JUNIE KHOO



Dear COGNO members

First and foremost, my greatest gratitude to all for granting me this prestigious COGNO Educational Preceptorship Award. Attending the COGNO Annual Scientific Meeting allowed me an opportunity to get more exposure on neuro-oncology; meeting and listening from acclaimed international and local Australian speakers on relevant aspects in translational science, novel therapies and supportive care. The quality of the talks were superb, in depth yet easy to understand; and most of all, everyone could speak and present so well and with such ease. I am impressed by how eloquently everyone's presentation skills, not forgetting all the medical students that could present their posters and talk about their projects with such poise and confidence. Bravo indeed!!

The talks were well organized, and topics were all relevant. The translational science talks had definitely opened my eyes. My training and current practices are mainly clinical based, focusing on treatments in medical and radiation oncology, and I have to say that exposure to translational science and research has always been limited, due to time restraint as well as limitation in resources. Labs and curing mice from cancers has never been part of the curriculum that I was exposed to. But it is exciting to see where all the medications that we offer to patients as part of their cancer treatment, are designed and tested. I do hope with implementation of various government policies in Malaysia, including establishment of Clinical Research Malaysia, as well as initiation of Phase 1 realization Project, aimed at developing more early phase studies in Malaysia; would aid to train and educate, and improving research in Malaysia. I do hope that more Malaysians are able to learn and adapt good practices from advance countries like Australia to nurture a better clinical research ecosystem in Malaysia. With hopes of having more oncologists in the near future, doing research and running clinical trials can be adopted more easily into our daily practise.

I learned many good tips in treatment of neuro-oncology, from surgical standpoint, to medical and radiation oncological treatments. It would definitely help in my patient management. The dinner venue was fantastic. The view was great, and so was the company.

I am also very thankful to have met such helpful and friendly organizing committee, that helped me during the course of application for the preceptorship, and throughout my stay during the ASM. Special thanks to Associate Professor Zarnie Lwin and Dr Jim Whittle for being so welcoming to a shy and mostly awkward me; to Yi Feng for all your patience during our correspondence as well as all the hard work the organizing committee had pour out for making the 2022 COGNO ASM such an impressive and memorable one.

I thoroughly enjoyed the balmy weather at Brisbane, as well as the clean and green city; with lots of lovely memories to bring home with me. I do look forward to future endeavours, and until we meet again, please stay healthy and safe.

With lots of love from Malaysia
Dr Junie Khoo

TRIAL UPDATES

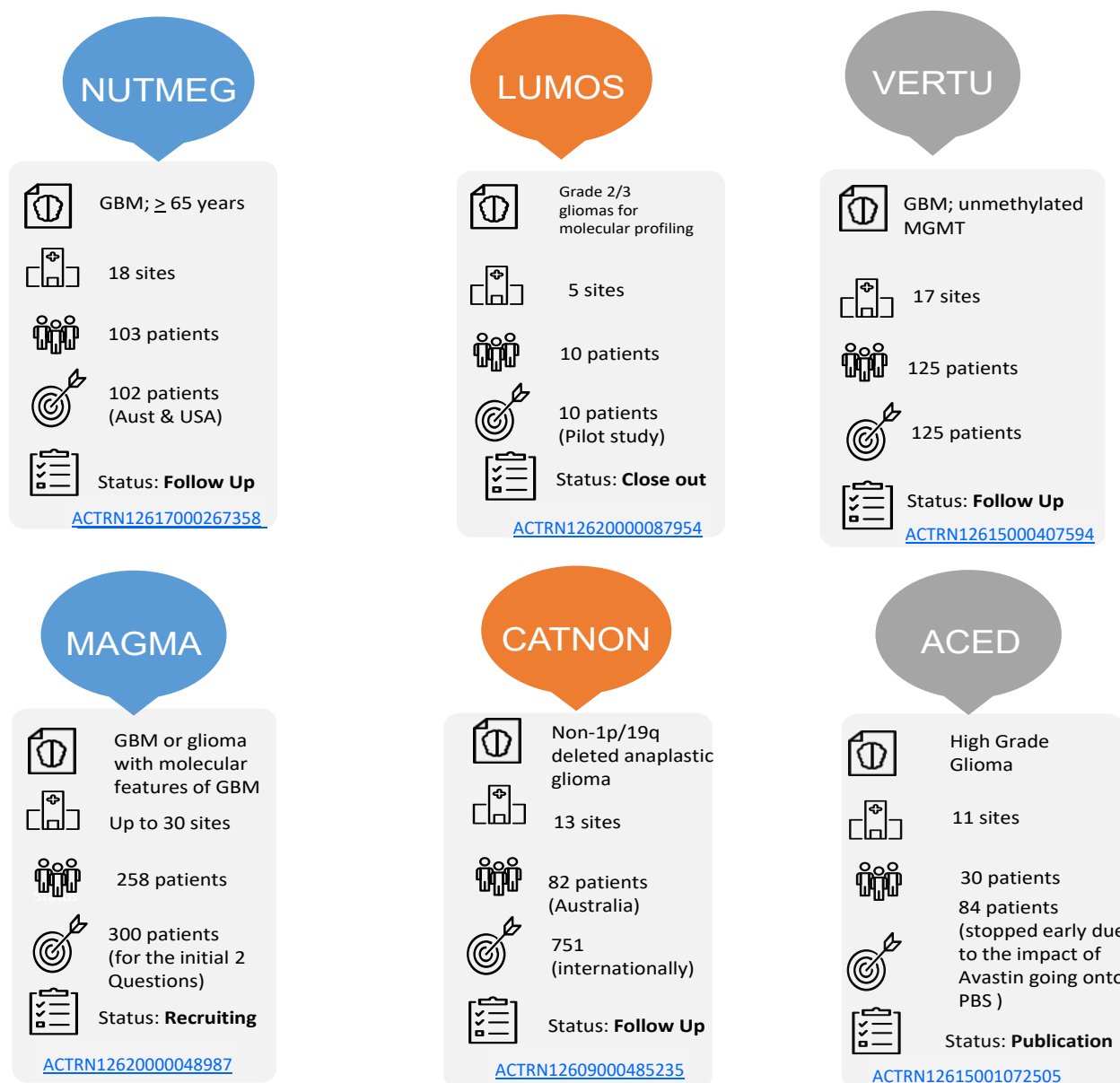
Recent highlights:

The MAGMA protocol paper was recently published in the BMJ Open - Volume 12, Issue 9, 2022. This paper can be found via the link: <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/12/9/e058107>

The NUTMEG trial results were presented by Dr Hao-Wen Sim at the Society for NeuroOncology (SNO) 2022 conference.

The VERTU trial was also presented as a poster at SNO 22. Please see below for photo's from the meeting.

Thank you to all site personnel for their ongoing diligence in screening and enrolling patients and to all participants and their families for their participation and contributions to the COGNO trials to date.



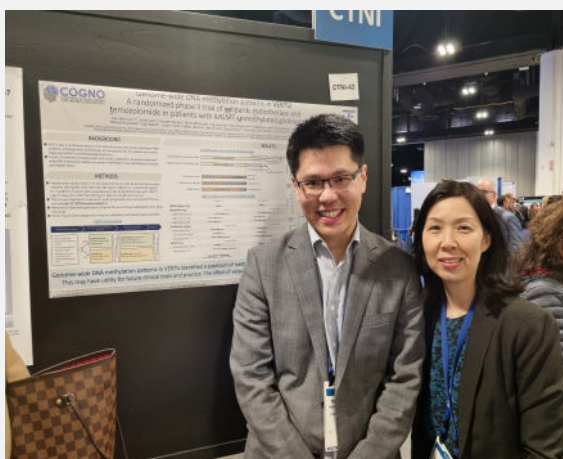


COGNO was well represented at the recent SNO conference held in Tampa in November 2022

A/Prof. Hao-Wen Sim (pictured) presented the [NUTMEG trial](#), which looked at the activity of adding the drug nivolumab to temozolomide in glioblastoma patients aged ≥ 65 years. NUTMEG found insufficient evidence of clinical benefit with nivolumab in this population. Important translational work is underway to characterise the glioma immune environment, which may help to identify future combinatorial strategies or subgroups of patients who may benefit from an immuno-oncology treatment approach.

A/Prof. Hao-Wen Sim presenting the NUTMEG trial

Hao-Wen also gave a poster presentation on the [VERTU trial - methylation substudy](#), which assessed genome-wide DNA methylation patterns to predict methylation class, glioblastoma subtype, and MGMT status. The VERTU trial evaluated veliparib, a brain-penetrant PARP inhibitor, combined with radiotherapy and temozolomide, for patients with newly diagnosed MGMT-unmethylated glioblastoma. The VERTU trial - methylation substudy successfully identified a spectrum of methylation-defined subgroups, reflecting tumoral heterogeneity which may have utility for future clinical trials and practice. These findings are part of an ongoing suite of VERTU-related translational work.

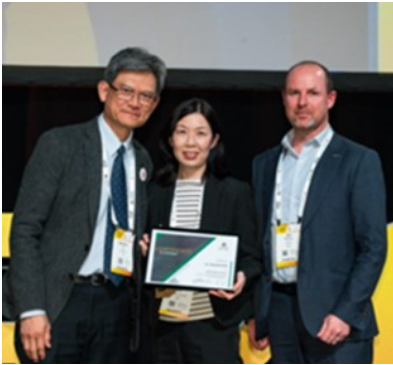


A/Prof. Hao-Wen Sim and A/Prof. Eng Siew Koh (COGNO Chair) standing in front of the VERTU poster.

A/Prof. Hao-Wen Sim, A/Prof. Zarnie Lwin, Prof. Hui Gan, A/Prof. Eng Siew Koh and Prof. Mustafa Khasraw catching up at the SNO conference



FIG (FET PET IN GBM) STUDY - A COGNO CO-BADGED STUDY WITH TROG CANCER RESEARCH



Congratulations to Associate Professor Eng-Siew Koh and the FIG trial collaborative investigation team who won two awards at the RANZCR Annual Scientific Meeting held in Adelaide, SA from 27-30 October 2022.

The oral abstract title was “*A prospective, multi-centre trial of FET-PET In Glioblastoma (FIG) patients (TROG 18.06): Nuclear Medicine and Radiation Oncology credentialing program results*”.

The awards were:

The Chris Atkinson Award - Best Scientific Paper Presentation in Radiation Oncology, and

The Elekta Award - Advances in the Use of Technology in Radiation Therapy - Best Scientific Paper.

NEW CONCEPTS / TRIALS IN DEVELOPMENT

Do you have an idea for a potential study?

The COGNO SAC (Scientific Advisory Committee) meets four times a year to assist with developing trial concepts. Concepts are due four weeks prior to each meeting. The concept submission form can be found on the COGNO website (www.cogno.org.au). During the SAC meeting, new protocols are presented by the proposer, and feedback is provided by clinical, translational, consumer and scientific members of the committee. If you have a great idea, you are welcome to contact the COGNO SAC to discuss how we can assist in concept development.

If you become aware of a funding opportunity during the year that might be of relevance to COGNO or for which you would like to involve COGNO in your application, please let us know! Under these circumstances, we can facilitate urgent COGNO SAC review and COGNO input to assist you in refining your proposal, building your team, and hopefully improving your chances of a successful application.

If you require any further information, please email ctc.cogno@sydney.edu.au.

Prof Hui Gan and Prof Bryan Day, on behalf of the COGNO SAC and COGNO community.



SAC Meeting at COGNO 2022 ASM

COGNO STAFF UPDATE

With the expansion of our trials portfolio, we would like to welcome the following people to our COGNO team:

- Kristen McParland has taken on the role as the COGNO Research Development Lead (RDL)
- Lisa Bailey will be taking on the COGNO Clinical Trial Operations Lead (CTOL) role for the PersoMed trial
- Tosin Omotoso will be coming on board as the PICCOG Trial Coordinator
- Vicki Xie will be joining the PICCOG team as the Data Manager
- The MAGMA, NUTMEG, PersoMed-I, PICCOG and VERTU trials welcomes a new Clinical Trials Assistant (CTA), Janine.

Shervin Sepehr will be moving to another team at the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre. Thank you Shervin for all your hard work on the COGNO trials to date. We are sorry to see you go.



Kristen McParland - COGNO Research Development Lead

Kristen McParland is a Research Development Lead at the NHMRC Clinical Trial Centre, The University of Sydney. Kristen has a long affiliation with the University of Sydney having completed a Bachelor of Medical Science Degree (Honours) and later a PhD in the Faculty of Medicine and Health. She has worked as an academic in the Department of Pharmacology, later pursuing a career in clinical research in the pharmaceutical industry. Following a career break to focus on her family, she returned to The University of Sydney to work in clinical trial operations where she worked on the “MoST programme platform study” and an adaptive clinical trial in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Kristen spends her spare time weighing up the pros and cons of moving out of her “share house” inhabited by a husband and 4 teenagers and how much leave she can realistically take off for the Women’s World Cup 2023?



Lisa Bailey - Clinical Trial Operations Lead (PersoMed-I Trial)

Lisa has worked at the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre (CTC) since June 2008. During this time, she has worked as a Trial Coordinator and Monitor across the AGITG, ANZGOG and other Oncology trial portfolios. Lisa is currently the Clinical Trial Operations Lead for 1 COGNO trial - PersoMed-I and 4 other Oncology trials at the CTC

In her spare time, she enjoys gym workouts and running. She recently ran her first half marathon (21.1kms) in under 2 hours. Most importantly, she is the proud mother of 2 beautiful boys.



Tosin Omotoso - Trial Coordinator (PICCOG Trial)

Tosin Omotoso is a Trial Operations Coordinator at the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre. Prior to this position, he has had vast monitoring experience in the pharmaceutical industry. After taking a break from work to study Neuroscience at Macquarie University, he joined the NHMRC CTC to work on various cognitive and neuroscience based studies.

In his spare time, you can find him at the gym, scoffing down popcorn at the movies or learning muay thai.



Dr Vicki Xie - Clinical Data Manager (PICCOG Trial)

Dr Rui Dan (Vicki) Xie is a Clinical Data Manager at the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre across multiple trials spanning oncology and COVID-19. Prior to this position, she worked as a Biobank Officer at the Nepean Cancer Research Biobank for four years in lung oncology.

Vicki has a long affiliation with the University of Sydney having completed a Bachelor of Advanced Science Degree (Honours) and later a PhD in Neuroimmunology in the Faculty of Science. Her PhD used a murine model to investigate the role of a transcription factor, IRF8, in the form and function of microglia. Vicki has extensive community outreach experience for the Faculties of Science and Medicine & Health at the University of Sydney, and shares her passion for science by tutoring HSC Biology students on the weekends.

In her spare time, you can find Vicki at the local gym, solving puzzles and opening locks in an escape room, or giving her furbabies (guinea pigs) cuddles and a pamper session.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

COGNO now has 921 members! Help us expand our Group's expertise and networking capacity. If you know someone who would like to join, you can refer prospective members to our online membership application on our website (www.cogno.org.au) or office (cogno@cogno.org.au).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Australian Cancer Plan engagement hub

Cancer Australia has launched a new Australian Cancer Plan engagement hub - an easy-to-use interactive website to stay up to date with the development of the first Australian Cancer Plan.

- Visit the Australian Cancer Plan engagement hub: <https://engage.australiancancerplan.gov.au/acp>
- Register to receive updates: <https://engage.australiancancerplan.gov.au/register>

Asian Society for Neuro-Oncology (ASNO) Membership

For those interested in becoming an ASNO member, please see membership information here: <https://www.a-sno.org/membership/membership.php>

Cancer Council Victoria's new online services guide - My Cancer Guide

Linking to more than 450 support services across Victoria, the online guide helps people to search for the support services they need based on their cancer and location. Services include psychological support, help at home, wigs and scarves, exercise programs, treatment centres, financial counselling and much more. My Cancer Guide also provides information to help people make informed choices about the services they engage with and education to help them navigate the healthcare system. For further information visit <https://www.cancervic.org.au/cancer-support-services/>.

REMINDERS

- 22-24 Mar 2023, Australia New Zealand Gynaecological Oncology Group (ANZGOG) Annual Scientific Meeting, Brisbane, <https://www.anzgog.org.au/inform/annual-scientific-meeting/>
- 23 Mar 2023: Melanoma and Skin Cancer Trials Annual Scientific Meeting, Brisbane, https://www.masc.org.au/masc-trials-asm-2023/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=masc-trials-asm-2023
- 24-25 Mar 2023: Australasian Melanoma Conference, Brisbane, <https://www.melanoma2023.com/>
- 9 July 2023, Australian and New Zealand Urogenital and Prostate Cancer Trials Group (ANZUP) Annual Scientific Meeting, Melbourne, <https://anzup.org.au/asm2023/>
- 26-28 July 2023, Breast Cancer Trials Annual Scientific Meeting, Auckland, New Zealand, <https://www.breastcancertrials.org.au/research/annual-scientific-meeting/>
- 2 - 4 Aug 2023: Medical Oncology Group of Australia (MOGA) Annual Scientific Meeting, Perth, <https://www.moga.org.au/2023-asm>
- 8 - 11 Oct 2023: 15th COGNO Annual Scientific Meeting, Sydney, <https://cogno.org.au/default.aspx>
- 27 - 29 Oct 2023: Asian Society for Neuro-Oncology (ASNO) Annual Meeting, Indonesia, <https://asno2023.com/>
- 1 - 3 Nov 2023: Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA) Annual Scientific Meeting, Melbourne, <https://www.cosa.org.au/education-events/annual-scientific-meeting/>

Please note the COGNO office is closed from Friday 23 December 2022, re-opening Monday 9 January 2023. We wish everyone a Happy Festive Season and New Year.



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A/Prof Rosemary Harrup (Deputy Chair)
A/Prof Georgia Halkett (Treasurer)
A/Prof Liz Hovey (Secretary)
Prof Meera Agar
Ms Marcia Fleet
Prof Hui Gan
Dr Adrian Lee
Ms Robyn Leonard
Dr Jonathon Parkinson
Dr Hao-Wen Sim
Mrs Desma Spyridopoulos
Dr James Whittle

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