

Quick Update:

- ASM Update
- Getting to know COGNO's Management Committee members: Dr Jim Whittle
- Ideas Generation Workshop

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COGNO

COOPERATIVE TRIALS GROUP
FOR NEURO-ONCOLOGY

Member Newsletter

Issue 36

Autumn 2021

Message from our Chair



Dear COGNO members,

2021 is proving to be full of new and varied challenges of its own! As we see some of the pandemic-related restrictions lift, I hope that all life is returning to some semblance of "COVID-normal" for most.

COGNO committees and staff have continued to be active in development and innovations in particular the Outreach and Education Committee chaired by Dr Jim Whittle and the Consumer Advisory Panel, chaired by Desma Spyridopoulos, and the website working group's co-chaired by Desma and myself. Our SAC led by Professors Hui Gan and Bryan Day continues to refine

its processes for improved agility in response to funding opportunities, a greater focus on translational research and looking to more targeted calls for themed concept submission in future.

Pleasingly, plans are underway to hold our ASM in October this year in Melbourne for what we hope will be a hybrid in-person and virtual event, which will be a wonderful opportunity to reconnect again and share experiences and exchange ideas as a clinical trials community.

Our existing trial portfolio continues to make steady progress with the EORTC-led IWOT study in lower grade glioma. The NUTMEG trial edges towards its final recruitment target. The MAGMA study continues to recruit strongly across Australian sites, and the co-badged FIG study addressing the role FET-PET in GBM has pleasingly recruited its first two patients from Austin Health and Liverpool Hospital respectively.

Huge congratulations to Robyn Leonard and the Brain Cancer Collective for staging another highly successful "Bike Ride for Brain Cancer" fundraising event in support of Brain Cancer Biobanking Australia - an even more impressive feat considering that this occurred during the peak of the recent NSW floods!

As we enter the second quarter of 2021, we look towards our Ideas Generation Workshop on May 7th more broadly, we are looking to articulate and chart a more strategic path forward in realising COGNO's mission in achieving better health outcomes for patients and those affected by brain tumours through clinical trials research.

In closing, I wish you all a wonderful Easter and holiday break in April.

Associate Professor Eng-Siew Koh MBBS FRANZCR
Group Chair

ASM UPDATE

13th COGNO Annual Scientific Meeting:

Brain Cancer 2021: Concepts to Cure
Sunday 24th October - Tuesday 26th October 2021
Melbourne, Australia

The COGNO ASM will be held in Melbourne as a hybrid event, with the option to attend virtually. We are delighted to announce that international guest speakers [Professor Nino Chiocca](#) and [Professor Gelareh Zadeh](#) will be presenting virtually. Stay posted for further updates, or email cognoasm@ctc.usyd.edu.au to join our mailing list.

A call for abstracts will be circulated shortly so now is a good time to start thinking about your submission.

GETTING TO KNOW COGNO'S MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr Jim Whittle is a member of COGNO's Management Committee and chair of COGNO's Outreach and Education Committee.



Jim is a medical oncologist specialising in neuro-oncology and early phase clinical trials at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. His clinical training was completed at Royal Melbourne Hospital and Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, followed by a PhD and postdoctoral research (2015-2021) at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research in the Visvader / Lindeman Laboratory. Here he focussed on understanding resistance to cell death in cancer.

What impact has COVID-19 had on your day-to-day activities?

It is hard to believe it was only 12 months ago when COVID reached Australia. After some of the early forecasts, and the devastation other countries have experienced, I feel very fortunate that Australia managed to avert the worst of it. At the height of the pandemic, I was lucky that my research work could be completed remotely. Our son was still able to attend day-care and our miniature schnauzer flourished with both my wife and I at home. Clinically, the adjustment to using mostly telehealth was smoother than I anticipated, and I think it is something that will really benefit patients moving forward as so many of our patients live in regional or rural areas.

How did you become involved in COGNO?

I have amazing mentors in Professor Mark Rosenthal and Professor Kate Drummond who have provided significant support to pursue a career in neuro-oncology. Mark introduced me to COGNO in 2016 and I was fortunate to be the recipient of the 2017 MSD Hubert Stuerzl Memorial Educational Award which allowed me to travel to the Society for Neuro-Oncology Annual Meeting in New Orleans and develop a network of collaborators.

Why are you still a COGNO member?

I love the team and the drive of individuals within COGNO who want to see change. The neuro-oncology community in Australia is cohesive and inclusive, and works because of collaborative efforts of COGNO that are required for progress in the field. I also appreciate the opportunity to engage across specialties, and with well-established consumer representation that informs the research program.

What do you find most challenging about your work, and most rewarding?

Like most clinician scientists, finding the balance in research, clinical commitments and not letting this overwhelm my home life is an ongoing challenge that I have not yet mastered. It is something that I am constantly aware of and admire in others who manage to switch off when they get home. However, I love my job, and continue to be excited about discovery. In particular, being involved in taking a project from the laboratory through to clinical trial development has been very exciting.

What is a typical day for you?

I wake up at 6am when my 18mo son wakes up and immediately demands his breakfast; currently it's scrambled eggs. I am fortunate to live close to work so after a pretty short commute and day-care drop-off, I usually split my time across WEHI, Peter MacCallum and RMH. I spend two sessions a week seeing patients, and the rest of the time in laboratory research and managing the never-ending stream of emails and phone calls that come through.

What are you looking forward to in 2021?

Professionally, I think we will see a big drive in research as laboratories return to their normal level of performance and I think a real excitement amongst collaborators to push projects across the finishing line. 2020 was a year where everyone was just trying to survive, and I think 2021 brings a lot of hope. Clinical trials will gain more momentum as well in 2021. Personally, I am really looking forward to not having to factor in COVID-19 into my daily decisions and being able to travel again!

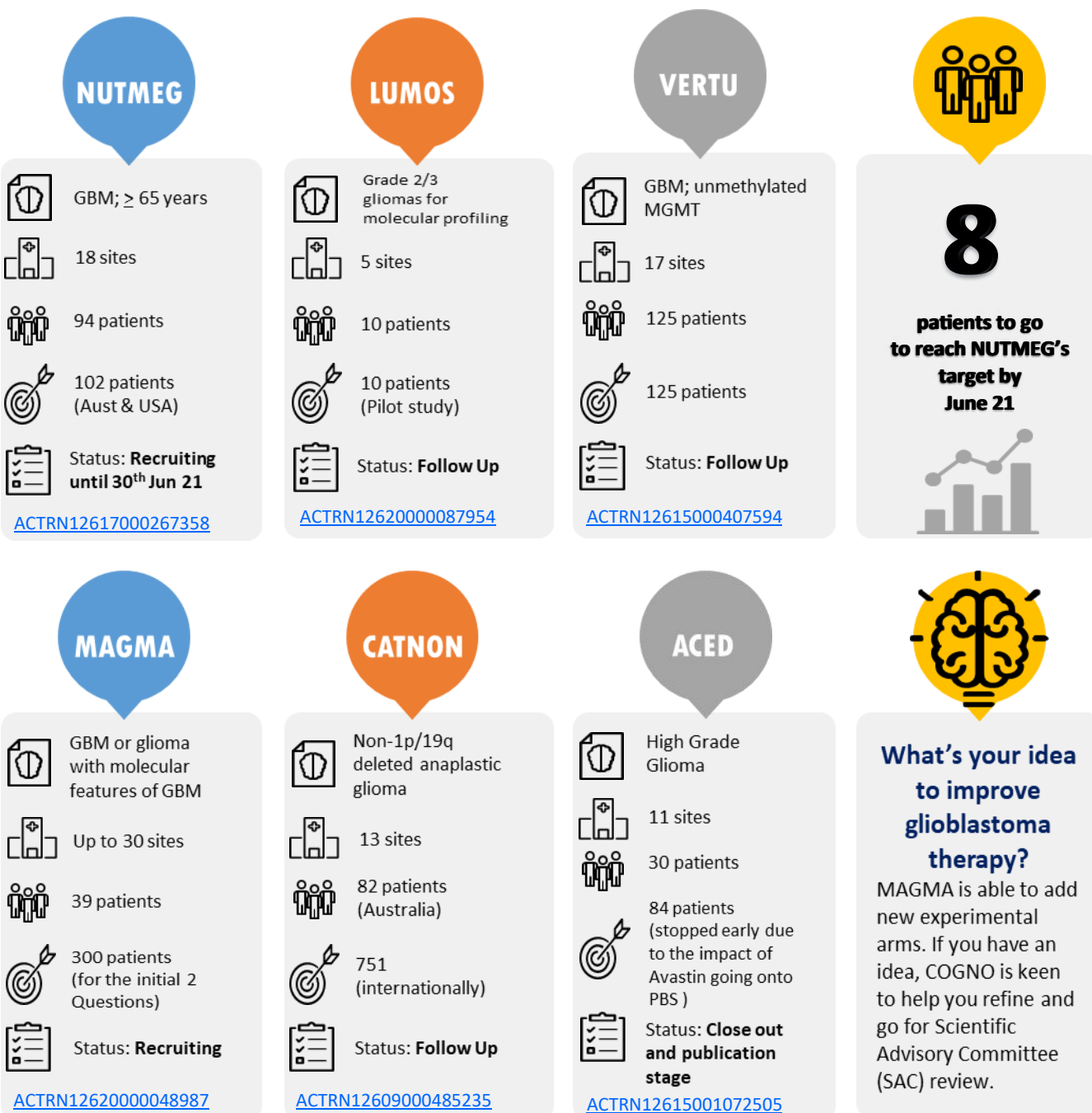
STUDY & TRIAL UPDATES

Since our last newsletter, the LUMOS study (pilot) has reached its target of 10 patients. The trial opened to recruitment in April 2020 and recruited 10 patients in less than 12 months. The LUMOS pilot study aims to provide Australian patients with treatment options by matching patients with targeted therapies based on molecular testing using contemporaneous tumour tissue. We look forward to the results to see if it demonstrates proof of concept and if this novel concept is feasible.

The NUTMEG trial has recruited 85% of the target and will be looking for an additional 15 patients from now until the end of June 2021, before the recruitment ends.

Since opening in September 2020, the MAGMA trial has opened at 13 sites and currently has 39 patients out of the target of 300 patients on the trial. This trial will assess various options in the standard of care for the management of glioblastoma and is currently looking for further ideas to expand its research questions.

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.



IWOT: IDH Mutated 1p/19q Intact Lower Grade Glioma Following Resection - Wait or Treat?

The IWOT trial is a phase III study that will include patients with IDH mutated astrocytoma who do not need immediate post-surgery treatment. The participants will be randomised to either an active surveillance arm or to immediate radiotherapy followed by chemotherapy.

Question: Does immediate post-surgery treatment improve the time until the next medical treatment is needed as compared to active surveillance?

The IWOT trial will be opening across Australia throughout 2021 and will aim to recruit up to 45 participants across 10 sites in Australia over the first three years. This study is being conducted internationally and is a collaboration between COGNO and the European Organisation for Research and Treatment of Cancer brain tumour group.

The IWOT trial coordinator is happy to provide any information that you may require on this study. Please email iwot@ctc.usyd.edu.au if you have any queries.

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. The next opportunity to present new concepts is on 17 June 2021. 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 kirston.barton@ctc.usyd.edu.au.

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

Important dates for noting:

- **29 April 2021** - Call for concepts
- **20 May 2021** - Concepts due for presentation to SAC 17 June 2021
- **25 August 2021** - NHMRC Clinical Trials and Cohorts Grants Due Date

IDEAS GENERATION WORKSHOP

COGNO will be hosting a virtual Ideas Generation Workshop on Friday 7 May 2021. The workshop is targeted at identifying areas of unmet need in relation to neuro-oncology clinical trials in Australia and globally.

If you have ideas relating to gaps in current knowledge or ideas for future clinical trials in neuro-oncology, we would like to hear from you.

Those selected will have the opportunity to present their trial concept to a group of expert neuro-oncology clinicians and researchers, who will provide feedback and suggested next steps to progress your study. This a great opportunity to advance your idea closer to fruition!

If you work with more junior clinicians / researchers who may be interested in presenting a concept at this forum, please reach out to encourage them to participate. One of the purposes of this workshop is to encourage and motivate early and mid-career researchers.

Submissions are welcome from all disciplines and at any stage of development. If you would like the submission form or to discuss your idea prior to submission, please feel free to contact Kirston Barton (COGNO Research Development Lead) at kirston.barton@ctc.usyd.edu.au or on (02) 8036 5285.

COGNO STAFF UPDATE



We welcome Yvonne Lee who joins the COGNO team as the Trial Operations Coordinator for the new COGNO trial IWOT. Yvonne has been working with the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre for over 3 years and is currently also working on CannabisCINV, EMBRACE and Oscillate (Lung) studies. Yvonne has worked as a coordinator at site level and in other academic research organisations. She studied Biomedical Science and pursued her PhD degree in mid-2000s, working in the laboratory looking at the uptake of lipoproteins in macrophages. In her spare time, she loves doing coastal walks, enjoying nature, and experimenting with new recipes.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

COGNO now has 823 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@ctc.usyd.edu.au. Membership is free.

COGNO DONATIONS

Brain cancer patients are in desperate need of major research breakthroughs, yet brain cancer remains one of the most underfunded and under researched of all the cancer groups. Your donation will help COGNO bring clinical trials to more people with brain cancer.

Online donations can be made via https://www.braincancercollective.com.au/donations_cogno
A special thanks to Brain Cancer Collective (BCC) for facilitating donations on COGNO's behalf.

2021 BIKE RIDE FOR BRAIN CANCER

Congratulations to the Brain Cancer Collective on successfully staging its annual Bike Ride for Brain Cancer on 19 - 20 March. After being Covided out in 2020, the riders were up for any challenge in 2021 and managed to complete 100kms of the 250km course despite the extreme weather conditions in NSW. The event raises awareness and funds for the important work of Brain Cancer Biobanking Australia. The spirit of the event is captured in the short video on this link: <https://youtu.be/RleLMdLugJg>



So many enthusiastic riders



despite the wet conditions

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Sydney Brain Tumour Patient Support Day

Date: Thursday, 20 May 2021

Location: Wesley Conference Centre, 220 Pitt St, Sydney

Registration will be at 9am with the program to commence at 9:30am, concluding at 3pm.

Registration open: <https://www.btaa.org.au/events/sydney-brain-tumour-patient-support-day>

Using PROMs “Down Under”- Conference on Using Patient-Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) in Research and Clinical Practice

Hosted by the Sydney Quality of Life Office, University of Sydney

Dates: 8 - 9 July 2021

Registration open: <https://www.sydney.edu.au/content/dam/corporate/documents/faculty-of-science/research/psychology/qolo-website-conference-info.pdf>

REMINDERS

- 23 - 25 June 2021: ANZCHOG Annual Scientific Meeting, virtual, <https://anzchog.org/asm/>
- 12 - 15 October 2021: AGITG Annual Scientific Meeting, Melbourne, <https://asm.gicancer.org.au/>
- 24 - 26 October 2021: 13th COGNO Annual Scientific Meeting, Melbourne, hybrid, <https://cogno.org.au/content.aspx?page=cognoasm-home>



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 A/Prof Georgia Halkett (Treasurer)
 A/Prof Liz Hovey (Secretary)
 Prof Meera Agar
 Ms Marcia Fleet
 Prof Hui Gan
 Prof Terry Johns
 Dr Ganessan Kichenadasse
 Ms Robyn Leonard
 A/Prof Zarnie Lwin
 Prof Anna Nowak
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 Dr James Whittle

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