

Quick Update:

- ASM Update
- Getting to know Mark Pinkham

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COGNO

COOPERATIVE TRIALS GROUP
FOR NEURO-ONCOLOGY

Member Newsletter

Issue 37

Winter 2021

Message from our Chair



Dear COGNO Member

With more than half of 2021 already behind us, we find that this year continues to present many varied challenges across professional and personal realms. Despite this, I remain impressed and encouraged at the commitment and capacity of COGNO members for their ongoing support of the current COGNO portfolio of trials as well as their energetic pursuit of new concepts and future protocols.

In particular, I would like to highlight the ongoing strong recruitment to the current two arms of the MAGMA trial, with 91 of a planned 300 participants randomised and 17 of 30 sites now

activated. The focus of the MAGMA study platform is increasingly turning to concepts for new arms that leverage off the existing infrastructure built to date.

I would like to encourage all members to respond to the current and/or future rounds of the Delphi study addressing research priorities in adult primary brain tumour research across Australia and New Zealand. This study is being led by Associate Professor Georgia Halkett, Lauren Breen and members of the core COGNO leadership team. It is important that the COGNO community provide their invaluable input into crystallising our future strategic research priorities.

May I take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks, on behalf of COGNO, to Associate Professor Matthew Foote for serving so diligently for over two years on the International Clinical Research Sub-Committee as Deputy Chair and subsequent Chair and helping to establish and navigate its key aims and priorities.

I would also like to commend and thank Dr Kathryn Field and Associate Professor Benjamin Chua who have jointly served as co-convenors of the Ideas Generation Workshop over the past several years. The IGW continues to serve as an important mechanism to cultivate diverse concepts and help shepherd them in terms of further development. The IGW will continue forward under the direct guidance of the Scientific Advisory Committee.

Finally, I look to seeing the COGNO community interact, albeit likely in a virtual environment this year, including the ASCO 2021 Brain Cancer Update in late July which reflects an excellent new initiative led by Dr Jim Whittle and the members of the Outreach and Education Committee.

A key highlight of the COGNO calendar will of course be our upcoming October 2021 ASM!

Stay safe and stay well.

Associate Professor Eng-Siew Koh MBBS FRANZCR
Group Chair

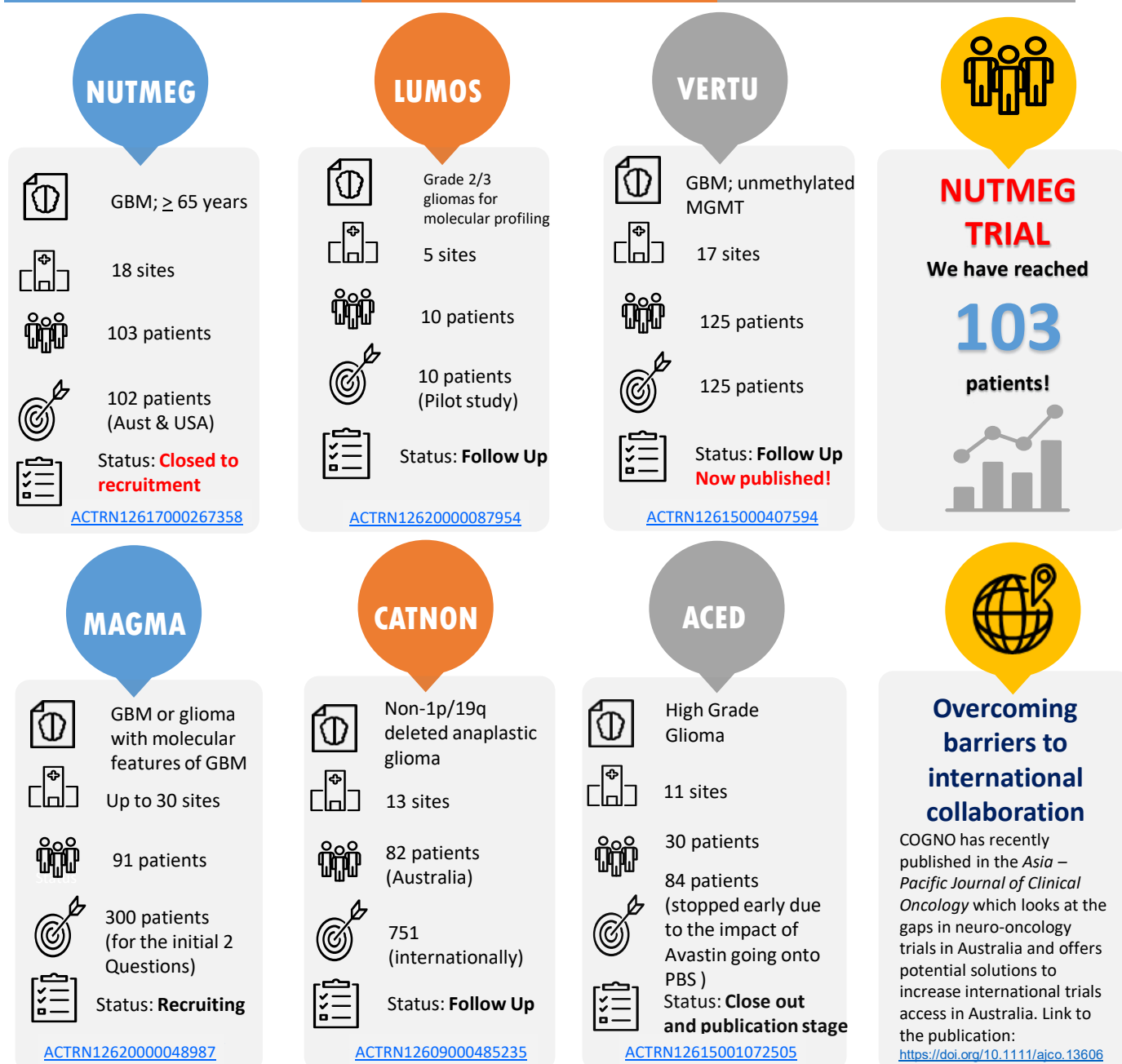
STUDY & TRIAL UPDATES

LATE BREAKING NEWS!!! Since our last newsletter, the NUTMEG trial has reached it's recruitment target. This is an amazing effort by all involved and we would like to thank the patients, their families, nurses, research coordinators, data managers, and clinical study site investigators participating in this trial.

Since opening in September 2020, the MAGMA trial has opened at 17 sites and currently has 91 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.

The main results of the VERTU study (adjuvant parp-inhibitor in GBM) was recently published in the journal *Neuro-Oncology* (13/5/21): <https://doi.org/10.1093/neuonc/noab111>; and the CATNON trial recently published in *Neuro-Oncology* (29/4/21): <https://doi.org/10.1093/neuonc/noab088>.

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.



ASM UPDATE

13th COGNO Annual Scientific Meeting (Virtual):
Brain Cancer 2021: Concepts to Cure
Sunday 24th October - Tuesday 26th October 2021

An outstanding [program](#) has been developed, with renowned international speakers including:



[Prof Gelareh Zadeh](#)
MD PhD FRCSC FAANS



[Prof David N. Louis](#)
MD



[Prof Michael Jenkinson](#)
MB ChB PhD FRCSEd



[Prof Nino Chiocca](#)
MD PhD FAANS

For more information and to register, visit <https://www.cogno.org.au/content.aspx?page=cognoasm-home>.

GETTING TO KNOW MARK PINKHAM



A/Prof Mark Pinkham is a member of the COGNO Scientific Advisory Committee and lead investigator in Australia for the COGNO iWOT study. He works as a Radiation Oncologist at Princess Alexandra Hospital and ICON Cancer Care, Brisbane. He is also an Associate Professor with Queensland University of Technology and an Honorary Associate at the NHMRC Trials Centre (University of Sydney). His research focusses on glioma, brain metastases and cancer survivorship.

How did you become involved in COGNO?

My first involvement with COGNO was the ASM in Sydney in 2011, when I was fortunate enough to receive a trainee Travel Grant to attend. When I returned fresh-faced from an overseas Fellowship in Neuro-Oncology and Stereotactic Radiosurgery in 2015, I gladly accepted an invitation to speak at the Brisbane meeting organised by Dr Cecilia Gzell. At that meeting I was awestruck to meet Professor Martin van den Bent who was an international Guest Speaker, and I certainly did not realise that five years later I would have the incredible opportunity to be working with him and COGNO on the EORTC-led iWOT study in lower grade IDH-mutant

astrocytomas. I was Convenor for the following ASM that returned to Brisbane in 2018 and I became a member of the COGNO Scientific Advisory Committee in 2019.

Why are you still a COGNO member?

Over the last 10 years, I have remained engaged with COGNO because I believe in its mission (to achieve better health outcomes for patients and those affected by brain tumours through clinical trials research) and I genuinely feel that, as a co-ordinated collaborative group, we can achieve this goal. The breadth and depth of expertise within our membership is remarkable and it is really rather humbling to learn about all of the different ways in Australia that we are tackling the effects of this disease. Attending the COGNO ASM and SAC meetings help me to stay connected with other colleagues who share this motivation, and I love the cross-fertilisation of ideas that this can bring.

Why did you become a radiation oncologist and what triggered your interest in neuro-oncology research?

Like too many medical students and junior doctors, I had little understanding or awareness of Radiation Oncology until I stumbled across it whilst caring for cancer patients in related medical specialties. For me, Radiation Oncology was a profession with the perfect balance of technology, humanities and a robust clinical evidence basis for many of the diseases we treat. The more I learnt about it, the more fascinated I became. This has been especially true in the field of neuro-oncology, where precision radiation treatments remain an important therapeutic modality and in recent years we have also expanded to treat a range of additional neurological diseases including benign tumours, vascular and functional conditions.

What are three things that you want to do in 2021?

1. Visit Uluru (and the Northern Territory in general) to learn more about indigenous Aboriginal culture.
2. Book a holiday to see my family in the UK. I have not seen them for over two years because of travel restrictions around COVID.
3. Run the 10 km Bridge-to-Brisbane fun run in less than 48 minutes, raising money for Brain Tumour research with our annual team 'Make Way For Grey' (grey matter, get it?).

What is a typical day for you?

Workdays usually begin at about 6am when either a child or small dog jumps up on to my chest to wake me up. Our dog Josie was a COVID-induced-lockdown-indulgence, but now certainly an integral and unreplaceable part of our family and home. I usually roll over until I hear my wife start the coffee machine and then begrudgingly start my day (she is definitely more of a morning person than me).

When I have Gamma Knife lists, the treatment process starts early with frame attachments from 7am but on other days I usually start at a more civilised pace which can include school drop off and more coffee runs before patiently searching around a hospital car park for a place to leave my car. I have public or private practice clinics most days which may include seeing patients who are on treatment, new consultations or in follow-up. I also typically make time for radiotherapy planning and dosimetry reviews, which is when I design and approve radiotherapy plans for patients due to start treatment soon or perform pre-treatment peer review and quality assurance with colleagues.

After lunch, I commonly sit down to a least a couple of teleconferences or meetings relating to research and education. In the last two weeks I have given two Registrar lectures to the Queensland Network, caught up with two PhD students that I am currently supervising and attended Trial Management Committee meetings for NUTMEG and OUTRUN (TROG 17.02). In the evenings I try to get home for family dinner and bedtime stories with my daughters at least two times per week. Twice per week I also run home from work; to ensure I make time for exercise, but also because I find it to be a great way to unwind and process things that may have happened during the day.

After dinner, I usually try to follow up on whatever I did not get time to complete during the day including emails, dictating clinic letters and alike. I usually finish with a nightcap (my choices are white wine, gin & tonic or craft beer), a chat with my wife about her day and a play with our dog before I fall asleep and start again the next day.

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 25 October 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@sydney.edu.au.

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

Important dates for noting:

- **25 August 2021** - NHMRC Clinical Trials and Cohorts Grants Due Date
- **6 September 2021** - Call for concepts
- **27 September 2021** - Concepts due for presentation to SAC on 25 October 2021

COGNO STAFF UPDATE



We farewell Hayley Thomas, and thank her for all her hard work with COGNO trials, and wish Hayley all the best in her new endeavours. We welcome Shervin Sepehr who will be taking over from Hayley as Clinical Trial Assistant.

Shervin's background is in biomedical sciences but he has also worked in the finance and banking industry. He enjoys learning languages (he is currently studying Japanese and plans to take up French and re-learn Danish soon!). Shervin also has a keen interest in technology, science, and music. Currently studying the Graduate Certificate in Clinical Trials Research at the University of Sydney, Shervin hopes to have a long-lasting career in clinical research.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

COGNO now has 833 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 (ctc.cogno@sydney.edu.au).

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.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

COGNO acknowledged in publication: "Implementation of 3D conformal radiotherapy technology at the National Cancer Centre Mongolia: a successful Asia-Pacific collaborative initiative" has been published in the Journal of Medical Imaging and Radiation Oncology. COGNO is acknowledged in this publication for the provision of the 2019 COGNO Outreach Education Preceptorship to Dr Minjmaa Minjgee from Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The article is available via: <http://doi.org/10.1111/1754-9485.13254>

Sydney Cancer Conference 2021 (SCC2021), 9-10 September: 'Bridging Research and Practice' is a national forum showcasing existing and emerging strengths in cancer research across Australia. The program will feature international and local speakers presenting on all areas of cancer research - basic biomedical, public health, clinical and psychosocial - making the latest information and research available to researchers, clinicians, students, consumers and members of the public. [Register now](#).

REMINDERS

- 19 - 20 August 2021: SNO/AANS/CNS Section on Tumors Third Annual Conference on Brain Metastases, virtual, https://www.soc-neuro-onc.org/WEB/Events/Brain_Mets/WEB/Event_Content/2021_Brain_Mets.aspx
- 9 - 10 September 2021: Sydney Cancer Conference, virtual, <https://www.sydney.edu.au/cancer-research-network/sydney-cancer-conference-2021.html>
- 16 - 19 September 2021: RANZCR Annual Scientific Meeting, Melbourne/hybrid, <https://www.ranzcr2021.com/>
- 25 - 26 September 2021: 16th Annual EANO Meeting, virtual, <https://www.eano.eu/eano2021/>
- 30 September 2021: SNO Virtual Clinical Trials Scholars Workshop, virtual, https://www.soc-neuro-onc.org/WEB/About_Content/News_Pages/2021_SNO_Clinical_Trials_Scholars_Workshop.aspx
- 1 - 2 October 2021: SNO/ASCO Annual Conference on CNS Clinical Trials, virtual, https://www.soc-neuro-onc.org/WEB/Events/CNS_Clinical_Trials/WEB/Event_Content/CNS_Clinical_Trials.aspx
- 3 - 7 October 2021: World Congress of Neurology, virtual, <https://2021.wcn-neurology.com/>
- 12 - 15 October 2021: AGITG Annual Scientific Meeting, virtual, <https://asm.gicancer.org.au/>
- 24 - 26 Oct 2021: 13th COGNO Annual Scientific Meeting (Virtual) <https://cogno.org.au/content.aspx?page=cognoasm-home>
- 16 - 18 November 2021: COSA Annual Scientific Meeting, Melbourne, <https://www.cosa2021.org/>
- 18 - 21 November 2021: SNO Annual Meeting & Educational Day, Boston USA, <https://www.eventscribe.net/2021/SNO/>
- 6 - 7 December 2021: SNO Maximal Safe Brain Tumor Resection: Intraoperative Visualization and the Connectome Conference, virtual, https://www.soc-neuro-onc.org/WEB/Events/Intraoperative_Visualization_and_the_Connectome/WEB/Event_Content/Intraoperative%20Visualization%20and%20the%20Connectome.aspx



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