

Quick Update:

- Save the Date- ASM 2022
- 13th COGNO Annual Scientific Meeting Review
- Getting to know Craig Gedye

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COGNO

COOPERATIVE TRIALS GROUP
FOR NEURO-ONCOLOGY

Member Newsletter

Issue 38

Spring / Summer 2021

Message from our Chair



Dear COGNO Member

What another incredible year 2021 has been! Despite the challenges faced in current times with pandemic-related restrictions and the resultant impacts on how we live, work, deliver optimal health care and approach all aspects of our clinical trial initiatives, I remain incredibly impressed at the sustained and high level of engagement of the COGNO community. Recent highlights include the ongoing strong recruitment to current trials such as MAGMA and the robust discussions at the MAGMA concept workshop designed to generate potential new arms. There have been a record number of concepts submitted to both the October and December Scientific

Advisory Committee meetings, much endeavour related to progressing the work of the International Clinical Research Subcommittee, energy invested into the re-vamp of the COGNO website and ongoing fruitful activities of the Outreach and Education Committee including the highly subscribed post ASCO 2021 update, to mention but a few of the many COGNO-related activities.

A personal highlight was the fully virtual ASM programme commencing Sunday October 24th, with the inaugural Australian Brain Cancer Research Alliance (ABCARA) Scientific Research Symposium co-led by Professor Hui Gan and Professor Terry Johns, a tremendous initiative with a focus on harnessing cutting-edge translational science. The concurrent BTAA Patient Education and Information Forum was a wonderful holistic programme joined by esteemed international guest speaker Ms Maureen Daniels from the Gerry & Nancy Pencer Brain Tumour Centre, Toronto, Canada. The main COGNO 2021 ASM programme spanning October 25th and 26th showcased the breadth and depth of neuro-oncology clinical care and research, replete with world-leading international and local guest speakers.

I wish to sincerely thank Associate Professor Rosemary Harrup and Dr Sanjeev Gill as ASM co-convenors, Jenny Chow and the entire ASM Organising Committee for creating and executing such a strong and dynamic virtual ASM programme.

As 2021 draws to a close, I reflect on COGNO as an organisation, the amazing and dedicated community it is, as well as the many current and horizon opportunities to strengthen and grow, to connect and engage its membership. I am reminded of the merit and value of our sustained collective efforts in the achievement of better health outcomes for patients and those affected by brain tumours through clinical trials research.

I wish you all a much deserved break this Christmas and holiday season!

Stay well and stay safe.

Associate Professor Eng-Siew Koh MBBS FRANZCR
Group Chair

SAVE THE DATE!
14th COGNO Annual Scientific Meeting
Sunday 16th October - Tuesday 18th October 2022
Brisbane Queensland Australia



Co-Convenors, Dr Ben Chua and Dr Hamish Alexander, are already busy planning for our 2022 ASM. Save the date and stay posted for updates in 2022.

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

Congratulations to Co-Convenors Associate Professor Rosemary Harrup and Dr Sanjeev Gill and the 2021 Organising Committee on a successful Annual Scientific Meeting. This was the first time our ASM was held as a virtual event and despite some challenges and lack of in-person networking, delegate feedback on the scientific program has been very positive, in particular the contributions from our international guest speakers, Professor Gelareh Zadeh, Professor David N Louis, Professor Michael Jenkinson, Professor Nino Chiocca and Ms Maureen Daniels.

Congratulations also to the organisers of the COGNO ASM satellite meetings: the ABCARA Scientific Research Symposium, and the BTAA Patient Education and Information Forum. Both events were well attended and very well received.

Congratulations to our award recipients:

- **BTAA Lynette Williams Award first prize** - Dr Ken Teng for his abstract "*Quality of life, cognition and psychological health in patients with benign and low-grade brain tumours*".
- **COGNO Young Investigator Award** - Dr Mihir Shanker for his abstract "*Quantitative volumetric tumour response in patients treated with combination Gamma Knife stereotactic radiosurgery and immunotherapy for melanoma brain metastases*".
- **COGNO Most Outstanding Oral Presentation** - Dr Mihir Shanker for his abstract "*Quantitative volumetric tumour response in patients treated with combination Gamma Knife stereotactic radiosurgery and immunotherapy for melanoma brain metastases*".
- **COGNO Most Outstanding Poster Presentation** - Dr Ken Teng for his abstract "*Quality of life, cognition and psychological health in patients with benign and low-grade brain tumours*".

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



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YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARD



Report from 2021 Recipient, Dr Mihir Shanker, on his oral presentation "Quantitative volumetric tumour response in patients treated with combination Gamma Knife stereotactic radiosurgery and immunotherapy for melanoma brain metastases".

I am grateful for the opportunity to have presented the results of our study at the COGNO 2021 ASM, assessing volumetric tumour response of melanoma brain metastases treated with combination Gamma Knife stereotactic radiosurgery (SRS) and immunotherapy.

The management of brain metastases is transforming into an incredibly complex practice with an armamentarium of multimodal treatment strategies emerging for metastases from multiple primary sites. Even more challenging, is stratifying treatment response and initiating appropriate and timely changes to management based on a combination of both clinical and radiological factors. The advent and increasing availability of new dynamic

imaging modalities, combined with an expansion of machine learning radiomics systems, is leading to a paradigm shift with a prospective and predictive evaluation of intracranial tumour responses following treatments.

Our study aimed to review the impact of volumetric change in melanoma brain metastases following treatment with stereotactic radiosurgery. Volumetric change itself is a widely and easily accessible metric of tumour response and changes in size are consistently incorporated into existing response assessment systems.

We determined four main findings with our results: Firstly, that volumetric response is favourably enhanced with the combination of stereotactic radiosurgery and immunotherapy in the initial 6 months following treatment. Secondly, that changes in volume as early as the very first 3 month post-SRS scan are predictive of long term outcomes for both treatment response and ultimate progression of disease. Thirdly, there are characteristic differences in the trajectory of volume change over 12 months between patients who have genuine progression vs. a radiation treatment effect; the former warranting a relatively expeditious intervention or change in management. Fourthly, that combination therapy with radiosurgery and immunotherapy is safe overall with an acceptable toxicity profile, which is supported by the current 2021 NCCN guidelines for melanoma brain metastases management.

Thank you to the COGNO team for this award and I look forward to an in-person meeting in the coming year.

*Dr Mihir Shanker
Gamma Knife Senior Research Fellow
Princess Alexandra Hospital, Queensland Health*

COGNO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The COGNO Annual General Meeting was held virtually during the ASM on 26 October 2021. COGNO membership ratified the incoming [Management Committee](#):

NAME	DISCIPLINE	STATE
A/Professor Eng-Siew Koh (Chair)	Radiation Oncologist	NSW
A/Professor Rosemary Harrup (Deputy Chair)	Medical Oncologist & Haematologist	TAS
Professor Georgia Halkett (Treasurer)	Psychosocial	WA
A/Professor Elizabeth Hovey (Secretary)	Medical Oncologist	NSW
Professor Meera Agar	Palliative Medicine Physician	NSW
Ms Marcia Fleet	Care Coordinator	VIC
Professor Terry Johns	Scientist	WA
Dr Ganessan Kichenadasse	Medical Oncologist	SA
Dr Adrian Lee	Medical Oncologist	NSW
Professor Anna Nowak	Medical Oncologist	WA
Dr Jonathon Parkinson	Neurosurgeon	NSW
Dr James Whittle	Medical Oncologist	VIC
Ex officio Management Committee members		
Ms Desma Spyridopoulos	Chair, Consumer Advisory Panel	NSW
Professor Hui Gan	Chair, Scientific Advisory Committee	VIC
Dr Hao-Wen Sim	Chair, International Clinical Research Subcommittee	NSW
Ms Robyn Leonard	Brain Cancer Biobanking Australia	NSW

GETTING TO KNOW CRAIG GEDYE



Associate Professor Craig Gedye is a member of the COGNO Scientific Advisory Committee and lead investigator for the COGNO MAGMA study.

Tell us a bit about your work

I'm privileged to work as a medical oncologist and cancer researcher. I work for people with melanoma, brain, prostate, bladder and kidney cancers at the Calvary Mater Newcastle.

I feel grateful and humbled when a treatment works for a patient; but very frustrated when a treatment fails. My research focuses on this problem, on complexity and heterogeneity in cancer - why are cancers different between different people; why are cancers cells different to each other; what does this mean for each person's treatment? This challenging problem spans projects across the research spectrum, from patient experience, through clinical trials, translational biomarkers and questions in basic science.

I'm very fortunate to lead several national cancer clinical trials for the ANZUP and COGNO cancer trials groups, to chair the ANZUP Renal Cancer Subcommittee, and I'm the Director of the HMRI Clinical Trials Unit which supports clinical trial investigators in the Hunter region. I'm a member of the Mark Hughes Scientific Advisory Committee, HNEHLD Clinical Trials Ethics Subcommittee, COGNO Scientific Advisory Committee and ANZUP Cancer Trials Scientific Advisory Committee.

How did you become involved in COGNO?

Like many of us, I went into a consultant at a new hospital and as the 'new kid' was asked to take over the brain cancer patients. With poor treatments, with the suffering and often poor outcomes for patients with brain cancer, it's not a 'popular' tumour stream. So what to do? Why, try to fix the problem of course! And with friends and mentors already in COGNO, it was an obvious choice.

What's the best part of being a COGNO member?

I'm very grateful to have the opportunity to be working on the MAGMA trial with COGNO, which is a pragmatic clinical trial trying to test simple ideas to improve overall survival in people with glioblastoma. This is a really exciting project as we have focused on aspects of trial design to improve the conduct of the study, respecting participants, respecting sites and respecting investigators. The trial is going extremely well so far, with many sites joining the study and recruitment is exceeding expectations. We hope that MAGMA will continue, with new ideas being tested in new randomisations moving forward.

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

Inefficient bureaucracy. When we spend more time reorganising clinics, chasing documents, searching for test results, manually writing paperwork and having to prescribe the same medication in four different systems, it leaves very little time for patient care. Patient care and research are both equally rewarding for me - I couldn't imagine one without the other.

What are you most proud of in your career?

Finding my path. I did a PhD and a postdoc, which in many ways were very successful; created lots of new ideas, hypotheses, methods, reagents, funding and support for future students and postdocs and some robust science. But because a lot of my results turned out to be 'negative' it made for modest publications. Academia doesn't necessarily reward robust science, it wants 'positive' outcomes, exciting "we'll cure cancer in five years" news bites, not "I can show with confidence that this hypothesis is completely wrong". It was complex coming to terms with this difference between academia and science, but I'm really grateful that I have found my path, focusing on ideas that are trying to improve patient outcomes.

What are three things you want to achieve in 2022?

1. Launching a new program of research across regional NSW!
2. Securing funding for a new arm for MAGMA!
3. Going to a third geophysical location, i.e. not just my house and the hospital. Maybe the supermarket?

TRIAL UPDATES

Since opening in September 2020, the MAGMA trial has opened at 20 sites and currently has 122 patients out of the target of 300 patients on the trial. MAGMA is testing early and prolonged chemotherapy treatment against standard of care in people with newly diagnosed glioblastoma and is currently looking for further ideas to expand its research questions.

Publication – CABARET trial

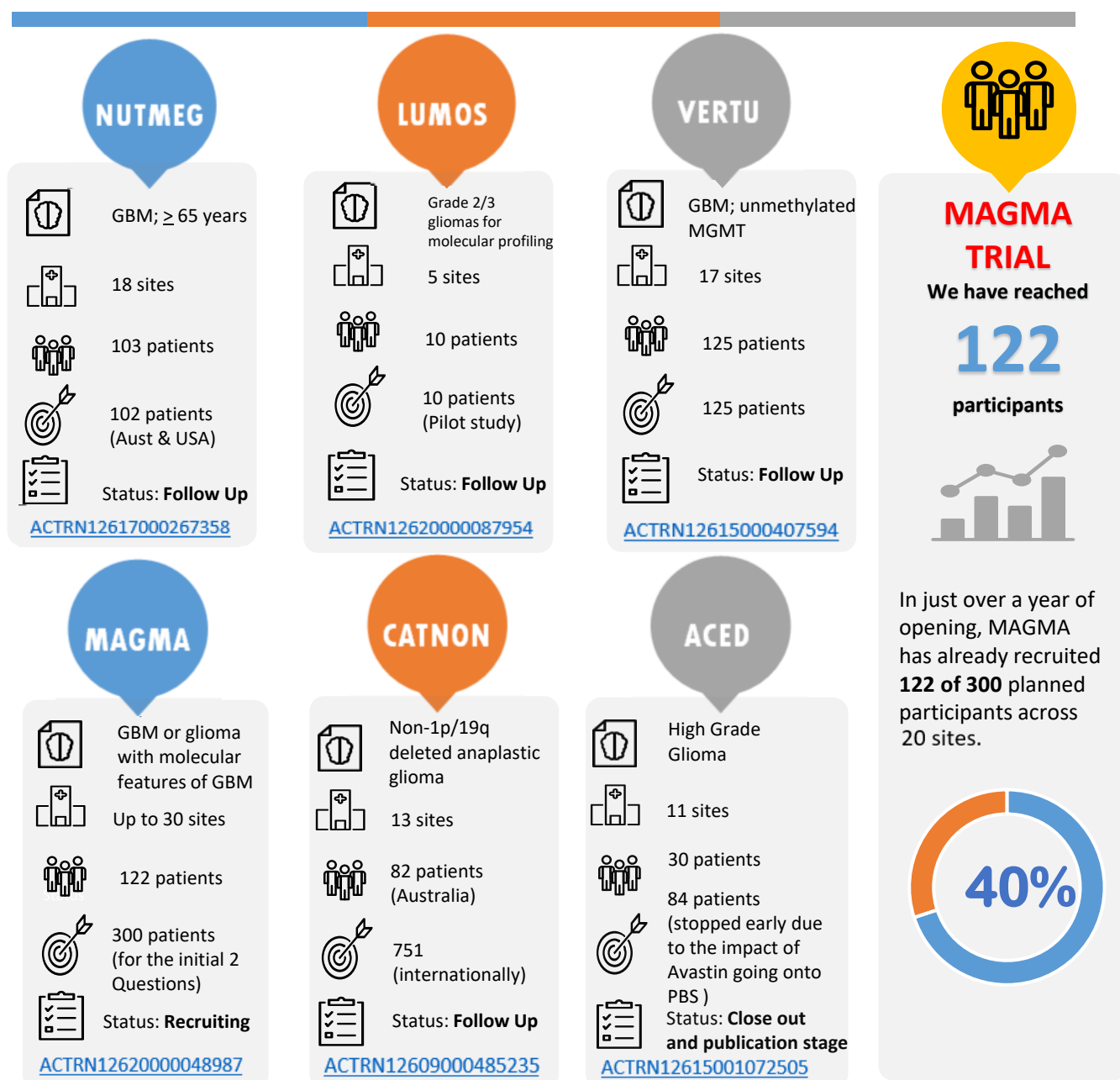
The outcomes of the use of computerised neurocognitive testing in the CABARET trial has been recently published in the *Journal of Clinical Neuroscience*.

Link to the publication: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jocn.2021.10.022>

International conference - Society for Neuro-Oncology Annual Scientific Meeting, USA

LUMOS and MAGMA were presented as posters at the 2021 Society for Neuro-Oncology Annual Scientific Meeting, November 18-21 in Boston, USA. The LUMOS trial was in the *Innovations in patient care* stream and the MAGMA trial was in the *Randomized Trials In Development* stream.

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.



MAGMA DESIGN WORKSHOP

COGNO recently hosted a design workshop to explore and discuss new concepts for incorporation into the MAGMA study. The MAGMA study is run using a consortium model in which anyone can propose additional study arms to be incorporated. Seven potential concepts were discussed with presenters throughout Australia with representation from radio-oncology, medical oncology, and translational research. Ideas included shorter radiotherapy schedules, exploring timing of oral chemotherapy administration, sample collection to support personalized medicine, and new drug combinations for recurrent GBM. A group of COGNO researchers and statisticians provided advice and strategy for incorporation as future MAGMA study arms.

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 will be in 2022, dates will be available early next year. 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.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

COGNO now has 862 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).

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

Introducing CQUEST - the new Quality of Life Technical Service team from UTS

Researchers at UTS [CHERE \(Centre for Health Economics Research and Evaluation\)](#) and [IMPACCT \(Improving Palliative, Aged and Chronic Care\)](#) have won the tender from Cancer Australia to deliver the Quality of Life Technical Service (QoL-TS) to CTGs (such as COGNO) from September 2021 to August 2024.

CQUEST (Cancer Quality of Life Expert Service Team) is led by [A/Prof Brendan Mulhern](#) and [Dr Tim Luckett](#) in collaboration with key members from [CREST \(Cancer Research Economics Support Team\)](#), [Cancer Symptoms Trials \(CST\)](#), and the previous QoL-TS provider, The University of Sydney's Quality of Life Office.

CQUEST includes expertise from across a wide range of disciplines relevant to the measurement of patient-reported outcomes (PRO) in cancer clinical trials (statistics, preference assessment, linguistics, data linkage, IT and qualitative methods), ensuring a comprehensive service to meet all CTG PRO-related needs.

CQUEST is available to support inclusion of PROs in CTG trials through review of concepts/protocols and training, and will soon be launching a website with links and resources.

In the meantime, you are welcome to contact CQUEST via cquest@uts.edu.au.

REMINDERS

- 14 - 17 March 2022: The Trans Tasman Radiation Oncology Group (TROG) Annual Scientific Meeting, Gold Coast, <https://asm.trog.com.au/>
- 17 - 18 March 2022: The Palliative Care Clinical Studies Collaborative (PaCCSC) and Cancer Symptom Trials (CST) Annual Research Forum, Online, www.uts.edu.au/paccsc-cst-forum-2022
- 23 - 26 March 2022: Australia New Zealand Gynaecological Oncology Group (ANZGOG) Annual Scientific Meeting, Melbourne, <https://www.anzgog.org.au/inform/annual-scientific-meeting/>
- 24 - 27 March 2022: The World Federation of Neuro-Oncology Societies (WFNOS) held jointly with the Asian Society for Neuro-Oncology (ASNO) and Annual Meeting of the Korean Society of Neuro-Oncology (KSNO), Seoul, South Korea, <https://www.wfnos2022.org/>
- 16 - 18 June 2022: Australian & New Zealand Children's Haematology / Oncology Group (ANZCHOG) Annual Scientific Meeting, Sydney, <https://anzchog2022.com/>

Please note the COGNO office is closed from Friday 24 December 2021, re-opening Monday 10 January 2022. Wishing everyone a Happy Festive Season and New Year.



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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
 Dr Adrian Lee
 Ms Robyn Leonard
 Dr Jonathon Parkinson
 Dr Hao-Wen Sim
 Mrs Desma Spyridopoulos
 Dr James Whittle

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 Prof Terry Johns (Translational Science Lead)
 Prof Meera Agar
 Ms Liz Barnes
 Dr Kirston Barton
 A/Prof Ben Chua
 Prof Kate Drummond
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 Dr Ashray Gunjur
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 A/Prof Michael Rodriguez
 A/Prof Jeremy Ruben
 Prof John Simes
 Mrs Desma Spyridopoulos
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 A/Prof Helen Wheeler

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