

Quick Update:

- Save the Date- ASM 2022
- Getting to know the trials team

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COGNO

COOPERATIVE TRIALS GROUP
FOR NEURO-ONCOLOGY

Member Newsletter

Issue 39

Autumn 2022

Message from our Chair



Dear COGNO Member

Pleasingly, 2022 opened strongly with the wonderful news of the successful \$1.98 million MRFF funding for the LUMOS2 (Low and Anaplastic Grade Glioma Umbrella Study of Molecular Guided TherapieS) study, under the MRFF 2021 Rare Cancers, Rare Diseases and Unmet Need grant opportunity. Congratulations again to Professor Hui Gan and colleagues for their very well deserved success. Work is well underway in progressing LUMOS2 study operations and full protocol development in close collaboration with key MoST collaborators. The LUMOS2 trial represents an incredible opportunity for participants with recurrent lower grade glioma, enabling access to cutting edge

molecular screening and novel interventional therapies for this important patient group. It also provides the opportunity to build Australian academic and research capacity in this space.

As the neuro-oncology community would be aware, the Australian Brain Cancer Mission has recently provided grant opportunities to support both pre-clinical brain cancer research as well as Research Data Infrastructure. These will be important opportunities to seize in augmenting capacity and expertise for the future.

It is gratifying to see that even through the pandemic-related disruptions of the last two years, the MAGMA trial continues to recruit strongly to the existing initial two arms and is the largest COGNO-led GBM trial in terms of number of sites. A concurrent priority remains to develop and fund potential new arms and I encourage COGNO members to continue to put forward their ideas and concepts for consideration at either the upcoming Scientific Advisory Committee meeting or the upcoming Ideas Generation Workshop to be held virtually on Friday 20 May 2022.

I wish to thank the COGNO membership, Committee Leads as well as the COGNO staff and operations team for their ongoing work and dedication to the cause of advancing outcomes for all of those affected by brain tumours.

I wish you all a restful break during this month of April.

Stay well and stay safe.

Associate Professor Eng-Siew Koh MBBS FRANZCR
Group Chair

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



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

GETTING TO KNOW THE TRIALS TEAM

COGNO would like to congratulate the following COGNO trials team members on their recent NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre (CTC) Staff Awards:

- Liz Barnes, Biostatistician, recipient of the Mentor Award Academic Staff
- Merryn Hall, Clinical Trials Operations Lead, recipient of the Chris Aiken Award for Leadership
- Evonne Tim, Senior Trial Operations Coordinator, recipient of the Mentor Award Professional Staff.

Below is an opportunity to learn more about these valuable team members.



LIZ BARNES

Could you tell us a bit about your background?

I am a biostatistician at the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre, University of Sydney. I started there in 2004 after many years working in animal health research at CSIRO. As well as my role as statistician in the COGNO group I make major contributions to ANZGOG and postgraduate teaching, as well as some cardiovascular. Two days per week I provide statistical outreach to the Children's Hospital at Westmead, where I contribute to many aspects of their research and HREC activities.

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

Mostly it has meant that instead of sitting at a computer in the office all day I sit at a computer at home all day, and conduct meetings and statistical consultations and student interactions via Zoom rather than face to face. I have enjoyed not having to commute but I miss my colleagues and the work and social chats we usually have so I'm looking forward to being at least part time in the office soon.

How did you become involved in COGNO?

When my colleague Chris Brown went to Ireland in 2013 I took over his role as COGNO statistician. I started when the CABARET study was almost complete and have contributed from development to publication in all the COGNO studies since then.

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

I love the variety of things I work on, the amazing and sometimes quirky people I meet and the interesting and important work that we do. The greatest challenge is trying to fit it all in and comply with many competing demands from a range of people who all believe their project should be the one at the top of my to-do list!

What do you do in your 'spare' time?

I am a keen knitter and knit a lot of blankets for the Wrap With Love cause. I am usually busy knitting out of sight of the camera during Zoom meetings - luckily I can do it without looking and not make too many mistakes!

What are you looking forward to in 2022?

My son lives in Edmonton, Canada and we haven't seen him since August 2019. Thankfully we have Zoom, WhatsApp and FaceTime to keep in touch and help him with his maths homework, but I sincerely hope we can get over there for a family white Christmas in 2022.



MERRYN HALL

Can you tell us a bit about your role?

As a Clinical Trial Operations Lead (CTOL) at the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre, I am responsible for the operational aspects for the COGNO portfolio, which covers start up, recruitment, follow up and close outs. Currently we have approximately 10 trials within our portfolio, all at various stages. My role revolves around taking the concept from the development phase into operationalising the trial with the assistance of the trials team, other key departments within the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre, the University of Sydney and COGNO. It involves overseeing study time-lines, finance, contracts, CRF design, database testing, data management, monitoring (central and on-site), staffing, providing updates and reports, logistics (eg. drug, biospecimen kits etc), ethics submissions and most importantly ensuring our trials are adhering to SOPs and in compliance with GCP, local and international regulations.

With the help of the dedicated COGNO trials operations team, which include Senior Trial Operations Coordinators (STOC), Trial Operations Coordinators (TOC), Clinical Trials Assistant (CTA), Clinical Data Managers (CDM) and our Clinical Lead and Research Fellows, we all play a role and are all responsible for various components of the trial.

Unfortunately things do not always go to plan and so the issues are escalated to the CTOL to make decisions, provide guidance and support. On any given day, I could get notified that there is a safety concern, a privacy breach or the site pharmacist frantically informs us that there is not enough study drug on site and the patient is coming in for treatment, which all require immediate action. Some issues you can pre-empt whereas others are unexpected or out of our control and we have to and try to mitigate in the best way we can and ensure everything is managed, documented and reported appropriately.

No two days are ever the same. I can have the best planned to-do list at the beginning of the day and it is quite often derailed depending on the issues presented.

Despite all the challenges, I get great satisfaction seeing a trial move from a concept to recruiting patients, in the hope that we are providing options to patient care and opening doors to new therapies, treatments and contributing to clinical research.



EVONNE TIM

Can you tell us a bit about your role?

A Trial Operations Coordinator is a jack of all trades. Trial operations needs to have a general clinical understanding of the study, data management, project management, statistics and translational research; as well as liaising with Site Coordinators, Pharmacists and Principal Investigators. We ensure all ethical, regulatory, governance and training requirements have been met before activating the site for recruitment.

Generally speaking, we are the central point of contact for enquiries and can answer questions about eligibility, the protocol, data entry, and tissue and blood sample collection. When we don't know the answer, we know the person to whom we can escalate it. We also provide site training, account passwords, and try resolve any issues. We ensure sites have enough study drug to treat their participants. We track and report on participant recruitment to stakeholders including the Trial Management Committee, ethics committee, and collaborative groups such as COGNO. Working with a Clinical Trial Operations Lead (CTOL) such as Meryn, we pull the different functional groups together to build effective working relationships to achieve great outcomes, and so that no one is working in a silo.

I am lucky enough to mentor the CTC's Clinical Trials Assistants. These lovely people are new to trials and are learning the basics and will hopefully contribute further to trial operations in the future. It's great seeing trials from their perspective because I am constantly asking myself why we do things, what value does it bring and how do my actions and decisions affect our hardworking sites and generous participants and their families.

COGNO IDEAS GENERATION WORKSHOP

COGNO will be hosting a virtual Ideas Generation Workshop on Friday, 20 May. The workshop is targeted at identifying areas of unmet need in relation to neuro-oncology clinical trials in Australia and globally.

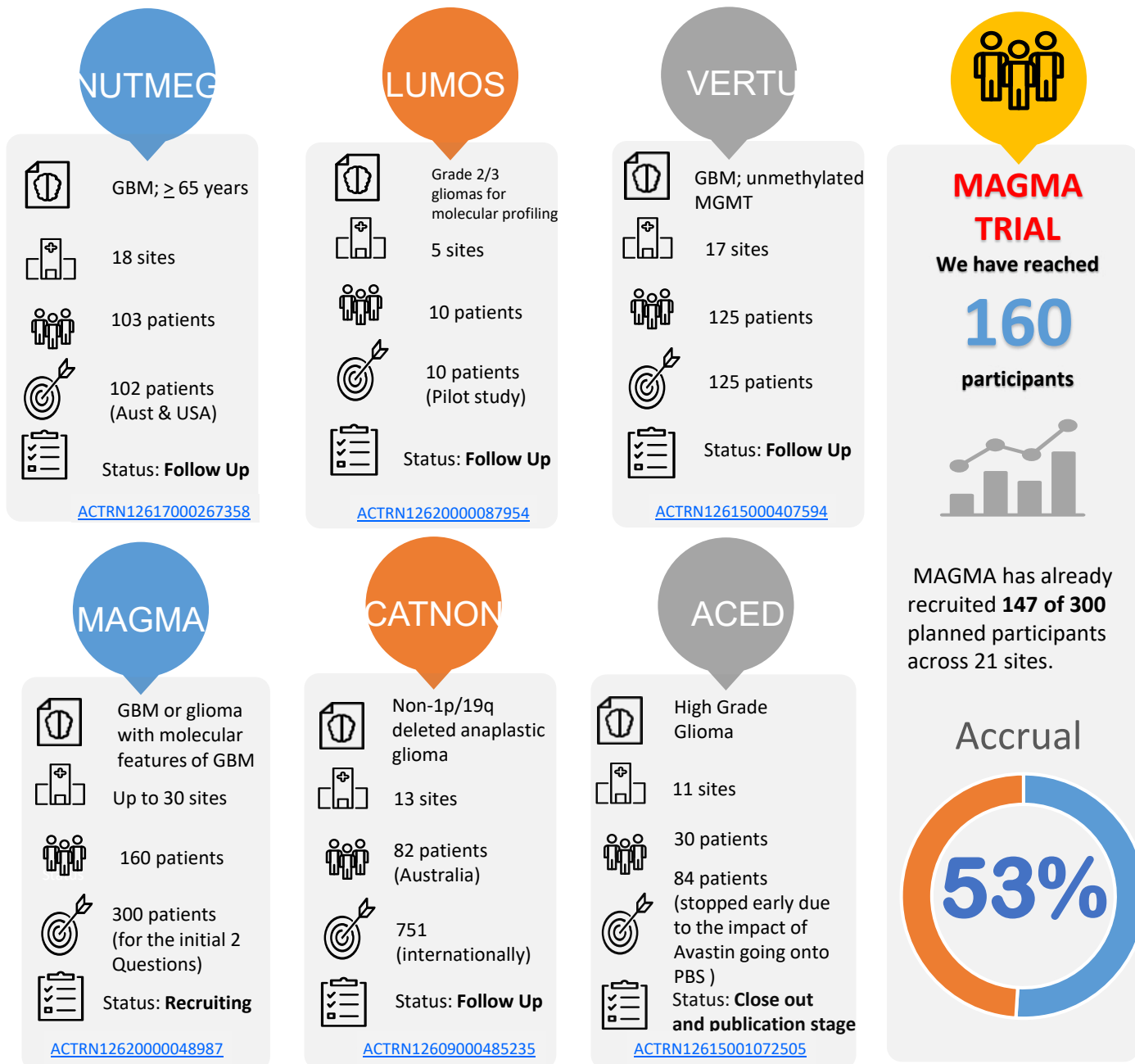
If you have ideas relating to gaps in current knowledge or ideas for future clinical trials in neuro-oncology, we would like to hear from you.

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@sydney.edu.au or on (02) 8036 5285.

Concept submissions are due 5:00 pm Friday, 29 April.

TRIAL UPDATES

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.



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

COGNO now has 874 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).

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 kirston.barton@sydney.edu.au.

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

COGNO DONATIONS

Brain cancer patients are in desperate need of major research breakthroughs, yet brain cancer remains one of the most under-funded 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

COSA Cancer Survivorship Research Priorities

A recent audit conducted by Cancer Australia has revealed that funding to cancer survivorship research remains consistently lower than funding to other fields of cancer research. This research was led by the COSA Survivorship Group, and involved a two-round online, modified-Delphi study conducted between November 2020 and February 2021. This study recommends that important research topics be prioritised in four distinct categories: physiological outcomes, psychosocial outcomes, population groups and health services. It has also developed consensus on the infrastructure priorities which need to be addressed to advance cancer survivorship research. Detailed outcomes have been published in *Supportive Care in Cancer* ([here](#)), with a one-page summary of the top priorities available [here](#).

REMINDERS

- 6 May 2022: GCCTI Grant Development Workshop, Online, <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/gccti-1-day-grant-development-workshop-may-2022-tickets-318647472167>
- 3 - 7 June 2022: ASCO Annual Meeting, Chicago USA, <https://conferences.asco.org/am/attend>
- 16 - 18 June 2022: Australian & New Zealand Children's Haematology / Oncology Group (ANZCHOG) Annual Scientific Meeting, Sydney, <https://anzchog2022.com/>
- 15 - 16 Sep 2022: NSW Cancer Conference, Sydney, <https://sydneyhealthpartners.org.au/>
- 25 - 30 Sep 2022: ACORD22 Workshop, Online, <https://www.moga.org.au/acord-workshop>
- 16 - 18 Oct 2022: 14th COGNO Annual Scientific Meeting, Brisbane, <https://www.cogno.org.au/content.aspx?page=cognoasm-home>
- 2 - 4 Nov 2022: COSA Annual Scientific Meeting, Brisbane, <https://www.cosaasm.org.au/>
- 14 - 17 Nov 2022: AGITG 24th Annual Scientific Meeting, Melbourne, <https://asm.gicancer.org.au/>
- 17 - 20 Nov 2022: SNO Annual Meeting, Tampa Bay USA, <https://www.eventscribe.net/2022/SNO/>



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 A/Prof Georgia Halkett (Treasurer)
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