April 2022

**Together in the fight against cancer**

Dear AAI Partners and Friends,

As we leave March, with its focus on colorectal and cervical cancer awareness, I am reminded yet again of the importance of advocacy and screening. Many cancers can be successfully treated if caught early, yet late-stage diagnosis is all too common in Africa. BVGH and partners launched a digital training program on pain management in cancer patients to respond to the challenges faced by Africa’s oncologists when supporting patients with advanced disease.

Early detection of cancers can be achieved through routine screenings such as those for cervical cancer, which BVGH launched in Rwanda’s Bugesera District in partnership with the Rwanda Biomedical Center. The cervical cancer Educate, Screen, and Treat program enabled the screening of 10% of the district’s eligible population and incorporated the crucial service into the district health centers’ routine offerings.

Advocacy and awareness ensure that the public recognizes the early signs of cancer and knows how to seek appropriate healthcare services. BVGH continues to work with advocacy organizations – including our three new partners, CancerAware, The Global Surgery Foundation, and Niola Cancer Care Foundation – to educate the general public and ensure patients receive optimal care.

For those patients who have cancer, BVGH and partners have organized training programs to strengthen hospitals’ diagnostic and treatment practices. BVGH’s recent digital training programs covered brachytherapy and manual immunohistochemistry.

Africa’s healthcare challenges require Africa-driven solutions and data. Through the African Consortium for Cancer Clinical Trials Mini-Grant program, BVGH continued to support early-career clinicians’ evaluation of cancer care barriers and needs in their hospitals.

Please share this newsletter with any of your colleagues who are interested in supporting AAI. We welcome any ideas or suggestions for improving cancer outcomes in Africa.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Dent, President & CEO
BIO Ventures for Global Health
BVGH is pleased to welcome three new AAI partners. We look forward to learning from them and working together to improve cancer patients’ experiences in Africa.

**CancerAware**

*CancerAware* is a dynamic and effective Nigerian non-profit organization that leverages education, advocacy, and patient support to reduce the rising incidence of breast and gynecologic cancers in the country. Some of their recent work includes community outreach events and the *MobiPINK Breast Cancer Project* – an initiative that offers psychosocial support to women with metastatic breast cancer and their caregivers. Through its *HPV Vaccination campaign*, CancerAware is asking the Government of Nigeria to introduce the HPV vaccine into Nigeria’s routine immunization programming, which would provide eligible girls with free vaccination access.

**The Global Surgery Foundation**

Launched in 2020, the *Global Surgery Foundation* (GSF) is dedicated to ensuring access to safe and affordable surgery for all people. GSF is an inclusive, international platform that serves all stakeholders in their efforts to increase safe surgical care services. The foundation works through four clinical areas: maternal health, trauma care, children’s surgery, and cancer care.

**Niola Cancer Care Foundation**

The first Nigerian foundation to focus on colorectal cancer, *Niola Cancer Care Foundation* is working towards screening all Nigerians over the age of 40 for colorectal cancer. Through their annual health education event (*IJOYA*), advocacy programs, and awareness campaigns, Niola has catalyzed the colorectal cancer screening of more than 4,000 Nigerians. Beyond screenings, Niola supports hospice patients and helps to reintegrate colorectal cancer survivors into society.
In 2021, BVGH, the Rwanda Biomedical Center, GardaWorld, Johnson & Johnson, and Faber Daeufer & Itrato partnered to launch a cervical cancer Educate, Screen, and Treat (EST) program that increased public awareness of cervical cancer and initiated human papillomavirus screening services in Bugesera District, Rwanda. Prior to the launch of screening services, BVGH and RBC equipped the district’s 16 health facilities with equipment and organized theoretical and practical trainings for the facilities’ 55 healthcare staff on the techniques required to complete screening, diagnosis, and treatment of their patients.

The staff showed marked improvement in their post-training assessment scores, as well as their confidence in the training topics, yet they emphasized the benefit of a refresher training. With funding from TogetHER for Health, BVGH and partners will launch a refresher training for district health facility staff in May 2022.

Cervical cancer screening and treatment are now permanent offerings at all of Bugesera District’s health facilities. The ongoing training will ensure that Rwanda’s women continue to receive high-quality care closer to home.
"The EST Program will improve women’s health and eradicate cervical cancer in our district. Routine refresher trainings and ongoing partnerships with organizations such as BVGH will ensure that our staff can continue to enhance cancer awareness within our catchment area and keep cervical cancer screening services running smoothly."

– Dr. Bonfils, Nyamata District Hospital

Manual IHC for Histotechnicians Digital Training

In partnership with City of Hope (USA) and Hawassa University (Ethiopia), BVGH organized a digital course to introduce histotechnicians to general immunohistochemistry (IHC) concepts and improve the skills of those already working with IHC. Covering topics such as IHC in practice, staining techniques, and IHC troubleshooting, the course attracted over 370 registrants from 10 African countries, and was taught by trainers from Australia, the USA, Kenya, Germany, and Ethiopia. Following the course, BVGH and partners launched an IHC digital mentorship platform to facilitate continued professional networking and engagement.

“The training was useful as it provided us with the opportunity to share knowledge with colleagues from other regions. Thanks to all the presenters, too. Your presentations made great positive impact on the quality of our work.” – Course participant
Managing Pain in Cancer Patients

Many African cancer patients are diagnosed at late stages of disease that can only be treated palliatively. To expand knowledge on the management of pain in cancer patients, BVGH led a two-day digital course co-taught by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and Nigerian experts. Focusing on oncology pain, pain medication, alternative pain management therapies, addiction, and transitioning medicated patients from hospital to home, the course was attended by more than 470 medical practitioners from 18 countries across Africa and Asia.

“I enjoyed the lectures – they were educational and helped me better understand what our cancer patients go through and how best to treat and encourage them in their last moments.” –Course participant

Digital High Dose-Rate Brachytherapy Training

BVGH and Rayos Contra Cancer launched a 19-week digital course on high dose-rate (HDR) brachytherapy for gynecologic cancers. Leveraging the expertise of brachytherapy leaders from Australia, Austria, and the USA, the training program will cover the entire HDR
brachytherapy process, including establishing a brachytherapy suite, safety and quality assurance processes, and treatment planning. More than 400 radiation oncologists, medical physicists, dosimetrists, and radiation therapists from 28 countries across Africa and Asia are participating in the program.

**Addressing the cancer data gap in Africa through clinical trials**

**AC³T Mini-Grant Awardees**

In partnership with Takeda, BVGH awarded African Consortium for Cancer Clinical Trials (AC³T) Study Pool Mini-Grants to eight early-career African researchers. These grants built on BVGH’s 14-week digital clinical trial training program and are supporting research into various avenues of improving the quality of cancer patient care in Africa. Let’s meet two of our awardees:

**Dr. Jamilu Faruk**

Dr. Jamilu Faruk is a pediatrician at Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital (ABUTH) working with children affected by cancers and hematological disorders. He has a particular interest in childhood leukemias and retinoblastoma. Dr. Faruk’s AC³T prospective research project aims to explore the quality of life of children with cancer and its link to cancer treatment abandonment.

"Without this grant, it would not have been possible to accomplish this project. It is my expectation that on completing this research, we will be able to identify factors that influence cancer treatment abandonment in ABUTH and its environs, with a view to ameliorating these factors and ultimately improving the quality of life and outcomes for children with cancer.”

— Dr. Jamilu Faruk

**Dr. Annet Nakaganda**

Dr. Annet Nakaganda is a Clinical Officer and Cancer Epidemiologist at the Uganda Cancer Institute (UCI) specializing in the management of cancer clinical trials and conducting epidemiological investigations for cancer control. She is a leader in cancer research and control, and is interested in identifying novel approaches for accelerating timely availability and utilization of locally-generated quality cancer data to direct the cancer control effort in low-resource settings. Dr. Nakaganda’s AC³T project will focus on evaluating the incidence, risk factors, clinical manifestation(s), assessment, and treatment of radiation-induced vaginal stenosis in cervical cancer patients at UCI.
**EST Program Case Study Presented at ASGCR**

BVGH led a poster presentation of the results of a healthcare worker training program during the **10th Annual Symposium on Global Cancer Research** (ASGCR). The training program was organized in partnership with the Rwanda Biomedical Center and included in BVGH's cervical cancer Educate, Screen, and Treat program in Rwanda. The poster can be viewed [here](#).

**AC³T Program Presented at TCIS Africa 2022**

During the **3rd Annual The Clinical Investigators’ Summit**, BVGH President Jennifer Dent presented the African Consortium for Cancer Clinical Trials and its impact on clinical trial capacity and the cancer data gap in Africa.
Cormode Cancer Foundation partners with African Independent Television (AIT) for a twice-monthly program that offers support for cancer patients and general cancer education. The program airs every second and fourth Wednesday at 8:15am WAT. View their library of shows here. Upcoming topics:

- April 13: Endometrial Cancer Signs, Symptoms, and Treatment Options
- April 27: Bowel Cancer – The Challenges Patients Face in Nigeria
- May 11: Ovarian Cancer
- May 25: The Colorectal Campaign – The Dos and Don’ts

Upcoming BVGH Digital Trainings

- Clinical Trial Evaluation and Regulation—April-June—click here if interested: https://forms.gle/sa7nJKyUhWCvBYR36
- Advanced Pathology of Solid Tumors—April-June—click here if interested: https://forms.gle/DrvhbDRtjeMMUJZEA
- Advanced Diagnostic Techniques and Diagnosis of Blood Disorders—June/July—more information coming
- Basic and Advanced Cancer Treatment - English—June/July—more information coming
- Basic and Advanced Cancer Treatment - French—more information coming
- HIV-Associated Malignancies—more information coming

Funding Opportunity: UICC Grants to Improve Early Detection of Breast Cancer

Breast cancer can be treated successfully if diagnosed early. UICC’s grants offer support for projects that focus on strong referral pathways, timely diagnoses, and affordable treatment. Applications are due May 15, 2022. Learn more here; apply here.

Funding Opportunity: NIH Supporting Collaborative Research to Benefit LMIC Institutions

This award program pairs researchers in the US with those in low- and middle-income (LMIC) countries with the goal of creating effective treatments that are relevant to the needs of the LMIC country. Applications are due July 13, 2022. Learn more here.

Join the Fight
To learn more about AAI and to get involved, please contact Katy Graef.

Thank you to our AAI Partners