Together in the fight against cancer

Dear AAI Partners and Friends,

Accurate, timely diagnoses are essential to directing cancer care decisions and maintaining positive treatment outcomes. Through training programs, such as our recent digital pathology of pediatric cancers and hematologic malignancies course, BVGH supported African pathologists’ professional development and continuing education. In parallel, we partnered with the American Society for Clinical Pathology to equip pathology laboratories in Côte d’Ivoire and Nigeria with microscopes and textbooks (donated by Quest Diagnostics® and PhenoPath), which the laboratories will use as they implement their recent digital learnings.

Through the African Consortium for Cancer Clinical Trials (AC3T), BVGH is enabling critical cancer research driven by African clinicians and scientists. Eight physicians from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda were awarded AC3T Study Pool Mini-Grants to perform research covering breast, gynecologic, pediatric, and thyroid cancers, as well as metastatic bone disease. Continue reading to learn more about two Tanzanian clinicians’ Mini-Grant projects.

We welcome two new AAI partners – the Fund for Science, Technology, and Innovation (FONSTI) in Côte d’Ivoire and our newest AAI hospital partner, Senkatana Oncology Clinic, located in Maseru, Lesotho. We look forward to advancing cancer research with FONSTI and supporting the Senkatana Oncology Clinic as its oncology team provides treatment services to cancer patients in Africa’s Mountain Kingdom.

As always, please share this newsletter with any of your colleagues who are interested in improving cancer patient outcomes globally or supporting AAI.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Dent, President & CEO
BIO Ventures for Global Health
Senkatana Oncology Clinic, Lesotho

Senkatana Oncology Clinic was founded in 2020 and is the first and only oncology center in Lesotho. Located in Lesotho’s capital city, Maseru, the clinic will open for out-patient chemotherapy services this year and will provide radiotherapy treatment starting in 2024. Prior to opening the Senkatana Oncology Clinic, Lesotho’s 2,000 cancer patients received treatment abroad – primarily in South Africa. Cancer patients diagnosed in Lesotho will now receive their treatment and care much closer to home.

FONSTI

The Fund for Science, Technology, and Innovation (FONSTI) identifies and supports high-quality scientific research and technological innovations that are targeted to impact the development of Côte d’Ivoire. The organization’s mission includes providing support to research structures, disseminating scientific information, and fostering international cooperation in scientific research. BVGH and FONSTI have partnered to bolster scientific and medical research capacity in Côte d’Ivoire.

Building clinical oncology capacity

First Rwandan Gynecology Oncology Fellowship Launched

Over 1,200 Rwandan women develop cervical cancer each year, with 35% of those women dying from the disease, yet there are currently no subspecialized gynecologic-oncologists in Rwanda. In response to Rwanda’s urgent gynecology-oncology needs, BVGH partnered with the Rwanda Ministry of Health and the International Gynecologic Cancer Society (IGCS) to establish a gynecologic oncology fellowship program at the University of Rwanda. The two-year fellowship program will consist of hands-on training led by two Ethiopian gynecologists – Dr. Dawit Worku, a graduate fellow from the IGCS Global Curriculum Mentorship and Training Program, and Dr. Tadios Asres, a former program mentor for IGCS fellows in Ethiopia. The program will also feature training rotations at three US-based cancer centers – Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School, and Women & Children’s Hospital of Rhode Island. Upon graduating from the fellowship program, the Rwandan clinicians will be qualified to lead the care of gynecologic cancer patients throughout their entire treatment journey and train new cohorts of gynecology-oncology subspecialists.

BVGH, IGCS members, and Rwandan fellows discussing program plans.
Pathology Textbooks Arrive in Nigeria and Rwanda

Through the coordinated efforts of BVGH and the American Society for Clinical Pathology, the pathology departments at the Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital (ABUTH) in Nigeria and the University Teaching Hospital of Kigali (CHUK) in Rwanda received shipments of pathology textbooks donated by PhenoPath, a Quest Diagnostics® company. Covering topics in surgical pathology, hematopathology, biology of cancer, and solid tumor pathology, the textbooks will be valuable additions to the hospitals’ pathology libraries. In addition to ABUTH and CHUK, several AAI hospitals will receive donated textbooks this year.

“The books from PhenoPath will expand the educational materials we have on hand to include the most current knowledge in pathology. These will be an invaluable resource for us now and in the future.”

– Professor Yawale Iliyasu, Associate Professor of Pathology, ABUTH

Digital Training in Specialized Pediatric Pathology

Morphology

Lecture by Dr. David Grier, Pathologist, Cincinnati Children’s Medical Center, USA.
In partnership with Pathologists Overseas and the Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital (ABUTH), BVGH organized a digital training series focused on specialized diagnostic techniques for hematologic and pediatric malignancies. The course included eight weekly sessions and attracted 750 registrants from 19 countries around the world.

Following the course, Prof. Lorenzo Leoncini, Director of the Pathological Anatomy Division, University Hospital of Siena, University of Siena, Italy, offered to review course participants’ challenging cancer cases and provide his expert diagnosis. Prof. Leoncini, who led the digital training program’s session on Burkitt’s lymphoma and other high-grade B cell lymphomas, is now offering his advice to pathologists beyond those who attended the course. If you are interested in receiving a diagnostic consultation from Prof. Leoncini, please complete the Request for Interest Form.

“We had a very exciting session on morphology and immunohistochemistry of pediatric cancers. This course is really an indispensable opportunity, specifically for us in sub-Saharan African where there is limited capacity compared to a developed country. The descriptions of how to diagnose using cost-effective morphology were absolutely valuable and helpful.” – Mebrat Teshome, Clinical Laboratory Scientist, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

Best Practices in Treating HIV-Associated Malignancies

Cancer patients with untreated HIV infection are at higher risk of developing AIDS-defining malignancies, which are often deadlier and require more targeted treatment methods than other types of cancer. In 2018, the World Health Organization estimated that the African continent accounts for nearly two-thirds of the global total of new HIV cases. Consequently, African oncologists see a high prevalence of cancer patients presenting with comorbid HIV infection. In response to training requests from hospital partners in Nigeria and Kenya, BVGH developed and led a four-part digital lecture series for oncologists on HIV-associated malignancies. Leveraging the expertise of oncology experts from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center (USA), Queens University (Canada), and Children’s Healthcare Atlanta (USA), the course explored treatment practices for adult and pediatric cancers associated with HIV infection, including cervical and vulvar cancers and Kaposi sarcoma. The program was attended by more than 700 participants from over 500 institutions around the world.
Increasing Diagnostic Output in Cote d'Ivoire

Ten gently used Nikon Eclipse E400 microscopes have arrived at University Hospital Center (CHU) Cocody in Côte d'Ivoire. Donated by Quest Diagnostics®, placement of the microscopes at CHU Cocody was coordinated by BVGH and the American Society for Clinical Pathology. Adding to the microscopes already available at CHU Cocody, this donation will allow more pathologists to review tissue samples at a single time, thereby reducing diagnostic turnaround time.

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. Nazima Dharsee, Consultant Oncologist, Ocean Road Cancer Institute, Tanzania

Dr. Faraja Chiwanga, Endocrinologist, Muhimbili National Hospital, Tanzania
Dr. Dharsee is a consultant oncologist at the Ocean Road Cancer Institute in Tanzania. Using her AC³T Study Pool Mini-Grant, Dr. Dharsee will be measuring the effectiveness of palliative radiotherapy treatment (PRT) on pain management in patients with metastatic bone disease, a highly painful condition triggered by advanced-stage cancer. By investigating factors that influence PRT effectiveness, Dr. Dharsee will gain valuable insights into prescribing the most appropriate PRT regimens and improving the quality of life for patients with metastatic bone disease.

Dr. Chiwanga is an endocrinologist at the Muhimbili National Hospital (MNH) in Tanzania. She will use her AC³T Study Pool Mini-Grant to conduct a retrospective study examining the characteristics of patients with various types of thyroid cancer. Dr. Chiwanga will also assess the correlations between pre-operative fine needle aspiration cytology and post-operative presentation of nodules in thyroid cancer patients. Dr. Chiwanga anticipates her research will contribute to the understanding of thyroid cancer patients’ characteristics and create opportunities to improve the quality and performance of fine needle aspiration of thyroid nodules at MNH.

**Clinical Trial Support for African Researchers and Regulatory Agencies**

BVGH partnered with Nigeria’s National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) to support the agency’s research objectives and clinical trial review practices. NAFDAC plays a key role in the fight against the rising incidence of cancer in Nigeria and encourages responsible research in the country. The course aimed to strengthen African regulatory agencies’ capacities to review, evaluate, and regulate trials, and to equip African researchers with the tools to conduct safe and effective research. The ten-lecture series attracted more than 240 attendees from 25 countries. Experts from the United States Food and Drug Administration and Takeda (USA); Princess Margaret Cancer Center (Canada); University College London and Health Research Authority, NHS (UK); and Johnson & Johnson (Belgium) covered topics prioritized by NAFDAC.

“At NAFDAC, our regulatory professionals are keen to gain expertise across regulatory practices, including reviewing clinical trial proposals from international companies and academics wishing to conduct research and import medicines into Nigeria. Earlier access to innovative medicines that benefit our population is a high priority and yet, it requires committed partnerships, responsible research, and working with NAFDAC to gain approval. It is imperative that all medicines are appropriately studied in the Nigerian setting and in our population to ensure safety and efficacy. Partnerships like the one we have with BVGH to support knowledge...”

Prof. Moji Christianah Adeyeye
exchange and best practices in reviewing clinical trial proposals are critical to achieving our goals at NAFDAC.™ – Prof. Moji Christianah Adeyeye, Director General, NAFDAC

Expanding awareness of cancer in Africa

Pursuing Global Health Equity through African-Led Research

Jennifer Dent discussed the African Consortium for Cancer Clinical Trials (AC3T) and BVGH’s Cervical Cancer Educate, Screen, and Treat program in Rwanda (supported by the Johnson & Johnson Foundation) during the “Achieving Global Health Equity with BioPharma and Medtech” session at the 2022 BIO International Convention.

The session’s moderator, Pierre Theodore, Vice President, Global Health Equity, Johnson & Johnson, began the session with a discussion about achieving health equity in the USA and globally. In response, Josette Gbemudu, Executive Director, Health Equity, Merck & Co., Inc. described the company’s USA equity initiatives and plans to expand internationally. Stephen Sammut, Senior Fellow, University of Pennsylvania Center for Technology Transfer, and Jennifer Miller, Associate Professor, Yale University, emphasized diversity in company leadership as foundational to achieving healthcare equity.

Colorectal Cancer Awareness in Nigeria

AAI partner, the Niola Cancer Care Foundation, is conducting a survey to understand colorectal cancer awareness amongst the Nigerian public. Live in Nigeria? BVGH and Niola Cancer Care Foundation encourage you to take (and share with family and friends) the anonymous survey: https://forms.gle/yBKR5FF8RxTpb9bzS

Announcements

Cameroon Oncology Center Publishes Experience Commissioning Linear Accelerator

The Cameroon Oncology Center (COC) recently published two papers in Radiation Science and Technology describing their approach to commissioning Cameroon’s first linear accelerator. Their publications also describe the quality assurance methods employed at COC to ensure that the Center’s patients receive safe, accurate, and high-quality treatment. Click below to learn more:

- Commissioning Experience of a Medical Linear Accelerator in a Low-Resource Setting in Sub-Saharan Africa
- End-to-End Test for a Radiotherapy Program Based on the Medical Linear Accelerator Installed in a Resource-Limited Oncology Centre in Sub-Saharan Africa
Cormode Cancer Foundation on AIT

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](#). August programming:

- **August 10**: What is Metastasis in Cancer? Facts and Myths
- **August 24**: Interview with HE Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu on the Impact of Collaboration with the UICC

The PEACE Symposium

The [PEACE](#) program – an educational partnership between pathologists from Emory University, Yale University, and African countries – is holding a symposium in December. Learn more [here](#).

Upcoming AAI Digital Trainings

Stay tuned for more information about BVGH’s upcoming AAI digital training programs:

- Introduction to Cancer Treatment – French
- Introduction to Cancer Treatment – English
- Advanced Oncology Nursing – French
- Advanced Oncology Nursing – English – Click [here](#) to add your name to the expression of interest form
- Pathology of Solid Tumors – French

Join the Fight

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