Together in the fight against cancer

Dear AAI Partners and Friends,

This month marks our 20-year anniversary: BVGH was formally launched at the BIO International Convention in 2004. Since then, we have been forging public-private partnerships for the good of our partners in low- and middle-income countries, conducting training and building capacity, and increasing access to quality healthcare. The African Access Initiative (AAI) was launched in 2017, and through this program, BVGH has coordinated delivery of over 17,000 packs of cancer medicines to partner hospitals; trained healthcare workers in a wide variety of skills, including palliative care, grant writing, and specific cancer treatments (i.e. prostate cancer, breast cancer); and bolstered diagnostic capacity for cancer.

BVGH has made significant progress over the past 20 years. We look forward to the next 20 years of providing value to our partners and beneficiaries.

Recently in Rwanda, BVGH connected our partner hospital, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Butare (CHUB), with Baylor College of Medicine researchers and pathologists to introduce 3D printed microscopes in CHUB’s pathology department and subsequently implement telepathology services. BVGH also concluded its AAI Treatment of Hematologic Cancers and French-language Prostate Cancer digital courses, resulting in meaningful improvement in attendees’ knowledge and confidence.

BVGH launched its new and expanded African Consortium for Cancer Clinical Trials (AC3T) online platform. The new platform now features more details about African clinical trial sites, including their clinical trial capabilities and interests across cancer and infectious diseases.

BVGH spoke on equitable access and clinical trials at two events in May – NSIA-LUTH Cancer Centre’s 2nd Brachytherapy Summit and Corporate Council of Africa’s 2024 US-Africa Business Summit. We look forward to the upcoming conference season and the chance to further discuss equity and access with our partners and collaborators.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Dent, President & CEO
BIO Ventures for Global Health
Global Pathology Partnership Launches Telepathology in Rwanda

With the right infrastructure in place, telepathology services can promote the education and cooperation of pathologists across the globe – resulting in enhanced cancer diagnosis and care. The implementation of telepathology relies on the local availability of instruments that can capture high-resolution digital images of pathology slides. These instruments are often costly, which limits the facilities that can participate in telepathology programs. To assist the University Hospital Center of Butare’s (CHUB) launch of telepathology, BVGH supported Dr. Elisée Hategekimana (CHUB) and Dr. Kelsey Hummel’s (Baylor College of Medicine [BCM]) successful application for a College of American Pathologists Global Pathology Development Grant.

With this grant, Dr. Hategekimana and Dr. Hummel partnered with OpenFlexure – the developer of an open-access, 3D printed microscope that directly connects to a computer and captures digital slide images – to place and validate a 3D printed microscope at CHUB. OpenFlexure researcher Joe Knapper, Dr. Hummel, and Dr. Daniel Rosen (BCM) joined Dr. Hategekimana in Rwanda to assemble the 3D printed microscope and train CHUB pathologists and residents on its use. Following the training at CHUB, Dr. Hategekimana and his colleagues have met with Dr. Hummel and Dr. Rosen each month to review CHUB pathology slides and compare their findings. To date, the team has reviewed 4 cases through telepathology, with plans to conduct additional differentials in the upcoming weeks. The team will continue their monthly meetings to support CHUB pathology staff’s educational needs and to explore research opportunities.

*Dr. Hummel is currently a cytopathology fellow at MD Anderson Cancer Center.
AAI Digital Training Bolsters Hematologic Cancer Treatment Knowledge

Despite hematologic cancers such as leukemias, lymphomas, and myeloproliferative disorders being highly prevalent in Africa, public cancer hospitals have limited capacity to care for afflicted patients. In response to requests from AAI partner hospitals, BVGH led a nine-session digital training program covering the treatment of hematologic cancers. Expert lecturers from the USA and Canada covered highly-requested topics such as caring for patients with specific types of hematologic cancers, as well as methods for managing symptoms of such malignancies. More than 570 healthcare professionals from 38 countries attended the 2024 AAI Treatment of Hematologic Cancers digital training program.

“I found the course content comprehensive and well-structured, covering a wide range of topics in hematology and oncology. The interactive format and case-based learning were particularly helpful in reinforcing key concepts and their clinical applications.”
-AAI Treatment of Hematologic Cancers Participant

BVGH’s French Prostate Cancer Course Attracts Clinicians from Across Francophone Africa

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer and the leading cause of cancer-related death in African men. Early in 2024, BVGH launched a six-session digital training program covering topics in prostate cancer diagnosis and treatment that were requested by AAI partner hospitals in Anglophone Africa. Responding to its Francophone hospital partners’ priorities, BVGH organized a parallel prostate cancer course held in French. The French course, which was taught by experts from Canada, France, and Senegal, covered the management of prostate cancer patients with low-, intermediate-, and high-risk prostate cancer; advanced and recurrent prostate cancer; and palliative and end-of-life care for prostate cancer patients. BVGH’s course attracted more than 250 clinicians from across 19 African countries.
The African Consortium for Cancer Clinical Trials (AC³T) was launched in 2017 by BVGH to foster cancer clinical trials in Africa led by African investigators and involving African patients. In 2019, BVGH created the AC³T Online Platform to showcase African cancer facilities’ clinical trial experience and capabilities, with the goal of encouraging multinational, cross-institutional clinical trial partnerships in Africa. The AC³T Online Platform summarized each profiled site’s clinical trial experience, staffing resources, cancer diagnostic and treatment capabilities, research systems, pharmacy capabilities, equipment, and more.

To provide a more user-friendly system, BVGH has updated the AC³T Online Platform. The redesigned platform offers users more search and filtering features and has expanded to include details about a site’s cancer and infectious diseases clinical trial capabilities.

If you are interested in being profiled on AC³T or getting matched with one of our partner sites, please reach out to Cathy Manner at cmanner@bvgh.org.
AAI partner hospital, NSIA-LUTH Cancer Center (NLCC), hosted its second annual Brachytherapy Summit, the only meeting of its kind in Nigeria. This year’s meeting theme was “Enhancing Access to Brachytherapy Services in LMICs” with a subtheme of “Financial Toxicity in Cancer Care”. The Summit convened healthcare professionals from across Nigeria to participate in panel discussions, presentations, and interactive workshops hosted by experts in the field, and hands-on training on 3D high-dose rate brachytherapy led by NLCC staff.

During the summit, BVGH’s Vice President, Programs, Dr. Katy Graef, delivered a presentation describing BVGH’s contribution to the launch of gynecologic brachytherapy services at NLCC. The presentation outlined digital and in-person training and mentorships organized by BVGH to ensure NLCC’s smooth commissioning of its brachytherapy machine. Dr. Zakaria Youbi, a radiation oncologist from Morocco whom BVGH engaged to train NLCC’s radiotherapy staff, shared his experience launching brachytherapy services at several hospitals, including NLCC. More than 160 cervical cancer patients have received brachytherapy treatment at NLCC since Dr. Youbi’s visit.
The Corporate Council on Africa hosted its annual summit in Dallas, Texas, bringing together leaders from the public and private sectors to forge new partnerships. Healthcare, and cancer specifically, was a key focus of the summit. While at the summit, BVGH held meetings with Mr. Aminu Umar-Sadiq, Managing Director and CEO of the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) to map partnership expansion plans. BVGH President and CEO Jennifer Dent also moderated a panel session focused on cancer detection, care, and access to treatment in Africa. BVGH’s African Access Initiative was featured alongside initiatives led by panelists that are improving cancer care at each step along the patient pathway.
HypoAfrica Publishes Cancer Research Article

BVGH and other members of the HypoAfrica study team published an article highlighting ongoing clinical trials in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and assessing SSA’s involvement in the global landscape of cancer research. The article, which was published in the European Society of Medicine’s Medical Research Archives can be accessed here.

Upcoming AAI Digital Trainings

Stay tuned for more information about BVGH’s upcoming digital training programs. If you would like to receive invitations to our courses, kindly submit this brief form: https://forms.gle/8stQmomGXaifY2ah8

- Introduction to Treatment of Pediatric Cancers (English)
- AAI ASC Cytology Education Seminar Series (English)
- Basic Pathology of Hematologic Cancers (French)
- Imaging Colorectal, Prostate, and Hematologic Cancers (English & French)
- Introduction to Liver, Colorectal, and Prostate Cancers in the Community (English)
- Introduction to Treatment of Colorectal and Liver Cancers (English)
- Introduction to Treatment of Colorectal and Hematologic Cancers (French)
- Cancer Patient Navigation (English)

Join the Fight

To learn more about AAI and to get involved, please contact Katy Graef.
Thank you to our AAI Partners

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