



December 08



## From the PoCoG Executive Office

Dear members,

The year 2008 had been another year of strong achievements for PoCoG. The PoCoG membership currently stands at 336, spanning a diverse range of professions and including international members.

Its organisational structure and governance documents were consolidated early this year and the restructure of the PoCoG Scientific Advisory Committee in February/March 2008 marked the beginning of intensifying research activity. The SAC reviewed and approved seven research concepts.

PoCoG's two Concept Development Workshops held in May and November this year took on a new form with the aim to develop new investigator initiated and PoCoG initiated studies in psycho-oncology.

Specifically, the November workshop focused on developing four new collaborative intervention study concepts. We will continue this work in 2009 by finalising the Memorandum of Understanding document for investigator initiated and PoCoG initiated collaborative studies and by fostering the development of two of these concepts to funding stage.

As always PoCoG is focused on providing and improving its member services. Once again this year PoCoG offered two rounds of the Travel Reimbursement Scheme. More than \$12,000 was awarded to PoCoG members to enable them to present their work at national and international conferences.

The Executive Office and Quality of Life office has been handling an ever-increasing number of technical and scientific inquiries and other requests for assistance or information. Since August 2008 statistical advice is available to members through PoCoG's statistician.

The web-based member services have also expanded with many new website features developed this year. Among them are the Members' index, the Email Forum, The Quality of Life Frequently Asked Questions, on-line seminars, the World Map of Psycho-oncology Research Centres and many others.

2009 will see PoCoG involved in collaborative studies with other groups and developing its first truly collaborative studies. These promise to be exciting but also challenging endeavours. I invite you to take advantage of PoCoG's many membership services and to get involved in the growing research activities.

On Behalf of the PoCoG Executive Office I would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and all the best for the coming New Year.

*Phyllis Butow*

Professor Phyllis Butow,  
Chair, PoCoG



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## Survey of PoCoG members about research priorities in psycho-oncology

We would like to thank all our members who took part in PoCoG's psycho-oncology research priorities survey. 180 members (61%) completed the survey. To our knowledge this was the first psycho-oncology priorities survey to be conducted in Australia.

The top three priorities identified were:

- Survivorship
- Distress identification, referral and management

- Issues for carers

The results were presented at the COSA Annual Scientific Meeting during the Best of the Best poster session on 19 November 2008 and are currently being prepared for publication in peer reviewed journals.

PoCoG plans to make the priorities survey one of its regular activities involving the whole membership.

## Congratulations to all COSA ASM prize winners!

There were many PoCoG members among the prize winners during the COSA ASM held in November at the Sydney Convention Centre. Among them were:

Dr Kerrie Clover – Roche Best of the Best oral presentation

Dr Heather Shepherd – Roche Best of the Best poster presentation

Professor Ian Olver – MOG Cancer Achievement Award

Ms Haryana Dhillon – HOTTAAH award

## News from the CALD study

This project has completed focus group and structured interviews with 91 cancer patients from Arabic, Greek and Chinese speaking backgrounds who are first generation Australians. The focus groups and interviews were taped, translated and transcribed, and analysed with the assistance of N-VIVO software. A range of themes emerged regarding communication and support challenges. One paper has been submitted and one is in preparation based on these results, which were reported at the COSA ASM and the International Psycho-Oncology Congress in 2008.

Four focus groups with interpreters were held in Victoria and NSW which are currently under analysis.

Ethics approval has been received to conduct a large national survey of over 1,000 cancer patients diagnosed in 2005 to 2007 from these language groups and a control group of Australian-born, English speaking patients, identified from cancer registries in NSW, Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland. Recruitment has commenced in NSW and is expected to be completed by the end of 2009.

## Welcome back to Dr Nicole Rankin

PoCoG's Executive Director Dr Nicole Rankin has recently returned from maternity leave. Dr Rankin will be sharing the position with Dr Melanie Price. Nicole is featured in this issue's "Who is Who of PoCoG" section on page 4.

## PoCoG second Concept Development Workshop

PoCoG's second Concept Development Workshop on 17 November 2008 was a great success. The focus of the Concept Development Workshop was to develop a study owned by all PoCoG members, in which our own members recruit patients, deliver the intervention and co-ordinate measurement of outcomes at their own centres.

More than 40 participants worked on developing new collaborative psycho-oncology intervention studies. Four new concepts were developed. PoCoG has already initiated the formation of the writing team for two of these to develop the concepts into fundable protocols.



***To all the workshop participants – a big THANK YOU for your valuable input and participation during the PoCoG Concept Development Workshop.***

***Your contribution was very much appreciated and we were inspired by your collective enthusiasm.***

***We hope that you found this workshop an enjoyable, rewarding and productive event.***



## Who is Who of PoCoG



**Name:**

Nicole Rankin, BA MSc, PhD

**Position:**

Executive Co-Director, PoCoG

**Research interests:**

Psychosocial screening issues, standards in psycho-oncology, head and neck cancers.

**Q. Tell us something about yourself**

A. I have just returned to work after a year on maternity leave. I have two lovely daughters, Darcy (nearly 4) and Ashleigh (1). I took up scrapbooking this year to stay creative while being at home full time – I am now totally addicted! I love travelling, my first experience was touring Europe and the UK with my parents as a child. I've been overseas a dozen times since and the highlights would be Nepal (1992), Prague (1996) and Scotland (1979, 1996 and 2007). I was an exchange student for my final year of high school. Looking back it seems surreal and the greatest benefit has been an enduring friendship of now more than 20 years. Holidays in the next few years will be in Australia

and New Zealand, we are planning to do lots of camping while the girls are little. And hopefully a trip to Lord Howe Island in 2010.

**Q. One thing you enjoy most about your work**

A. There is no typical and predictable day. Work is always busy and there are lots of challenges. I work with a fantastic group of people and find psycho-oncology is personally rewarding.

**Q. Your professional/psycho-oncology/research pet hate**

A. A wish rather than a pet-hate: that funding in psychosocial research be directed towards intervention and implementation studies rather than descriptive research.

**Q. Your favourite quote or motto?**

A. We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make our world. (Buddha)

**Q. Which book have you read most recently?**

A. People of the Book, by Geraldine Brooks (still going!)

**Q. Your first-ever job**

A. Check-out chick at Woolies. It was definitely *not* my calling in life.

## Useful resources

### World Map of Psycho-oncology Research Centres

World Map of Psycho-oncology Research Centres – the map is an interactive index of psycho-oncology centres throughout the world. We anticipate that this feature will assist researchers in psycho-oncology to:

- identify collaborating centres for studies
- identify centres for PhD / post-doctoral studies / work experience
- identify centres/individuals with expertise in particular areas
- foster collaborations between researchers conducting work in the same area

Centres in Australia and around the world were

contacted directly and asked for submissions. An announcement and call for submissions was also emailed using the International Psycho-oncology Society's (IPOS) mailing list. The map currently hosts 9 Australian entries, 2 entries from Asia, 10 entries from Europe and 4 entries from the Americas. Work will continue in 2009 to expand the world map.

This project also resulted in PoCoG being listed on the websites of various organisations including IPOS, Cancer Learning and the Leeds Psychosocial Oncology and Clinical Practice Research Group.

<http://www.pocog.org.au/content.aspx?page=Mappsychoncentres>



## Useful resources

### A new online seminar by A/Prof Jürg Bernhard, University of Bern and International Breast Cancer Study Group.

A public lecture was held on Wednesday 26th November, 3.30 – 5.00 pm titled: *Research in quality of life issues in cancer patients; challenges and future directions*. This lecture is now available to PoCoG members as an on-line seminar recording. To access it log in with your user name and password and follow the links from the welcome page or go to “research”→”research help”

## Research opportunities

Are you interested in research about family carers of people requiring palliative care?

The IPCFRC seeks to develop a strategic approach to palliative care research planning related to family carers of people requiring palliative care via establishing international partnerships and promoting information exchange. For more information refer to the website [www.ipcfrc.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.ipcfrc.unimelb.edu.au) or contact: [cpcpa@medstv.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:cpcpa@medstv.unimelb.edu.au)

Or click the link below for the brochure

<http://www.pocog.org.au/docview.aspx?id=54>



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