



## The Bernard Fox Memorial Award for Chair of PoCoG



It is our great pleasure to announce that the Chair of PoCoG, Professor Phyllis Butow has been named as the co-recipient of the prestigious

International Psycho-Oncology Society (IPOS) Bernard Fox Memorial Award. The award will be presented during the IPOS 11th World Congress of Psycho-Oncology which will be held in Vienna, Austria, 21 – 25 June 2009.

The award was established to honour an IPOS or community member who has made an outstanding contribution in education, research or leadership to the field of psycho-oncology. Her co-recipient is Dr Ruth McCorkle (PhD, FAAN) of Yale University in the USA, at the Congress.

We invite all PoCoG members intending to go to the IPOS congress this year to attend the official award ceremony and give Phyllis their support.



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## FROM THE PoCoG EXECUTIVE OFFICE

The year 2009 sees PoCoG focus on expanding its research activities. PoCoG was successful in receiving two Cancer Australia and Beyond Blue grants for phase III of the CALD project as well as for a collaborative project with the ANZ Germ Cell Trials Group (ANZGCTG) investigating the psychosocial sequelae of surviving testicular cancer. This study will recruit 250 men between 6 months and 5 years post-treatment and compare their performance on various measures of wellbeing with that of matched controls. The study aims to identify groups at risk of poor psychosocial outcomes and lay the groundwork for a future longitudinal study intended to inform intervention. A follow-up qualitative component will be conducted to explore issues of interest in more depth. The project also provides an opportunity to collaborate with the European Organisation for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC) on the validation of their new testicular cancer-specific quality of life questionnaire, the QLQ-TC26. PoCoG welcomes a new staff member, Allan 'Ben' Smith, to coordinate the project. Ben completed honours in psychology at the end of 2006, and has been working in the psycho-oncology field for the past 2 years. He will be undertaking the study as part of his PhD.

The Quality of Life office headed by its very

charismatic and enthusiastic Chair, Professor Madeleine King has been very active in developing new research projects and collaborating with other Collaborative Research Groups on various studies. For more information on these activities please read the update from the Quality of Life office.

The Concept Development Workshop in November 2008 resulted in the development of four research concepts which will be pursued further in 2009. The four projects are:

- Fear of recurrence in cancer survivorship
- Sleep disturbance
- Supporting patients with a poor prognosis
- Head & neck cancer – an intervention to improve psychosocial outcomes.

Working groups were formed by the workshop participants who expressed interest in being involved in these projects. We anticipate that two of these projects will be ready for submission for funding. For more information please log into the members-only section of the PoCoG website and download the workshop report from the "publications" section.

## Database of Patient-Reported Measures

PoCoG's online database of patient-reported measures is currently undergoing user acceptance testing and will be made freely available via the PoCoG website over the coming months. The database includes more than 250 quality of life, psychosocial, needs assessment, satisfaction and utility measures. We are inviting PoCoG members and other interested researchers to trial the database and complete a short feedback survey.

Please contact Dr Tim Lockett at [timl@psych.usyd.edu.au](mailto:timl@psych.usyd.edu.au) for more information.

## A new on-line seminar soon to come to the PoCoG website

Dr Nina Hallowell Public Health Sciences, University of Edinburgh

*Translating research into practice and practice into research: Researchers' and healthcare professionals' views of cancer genetics activities in the UK*

The seminar was recorded at the Prince of Wales hospital on Friday 20 February 2009 courtesy of the Psycho-social Research Group lead by A/Prof. Bettina Meiser.

At the end of her seminar Dr Hallowell posed two

questions two questions which she hoped would generate some discussion amongst POCOG members on the email forum.

First, to what extent do individuals need to understand the motivations (or intentions) underlying research in order to be able to give their consent to research participation?

Second, if researchers and research participants have a range of different and conflicting understandings of the motivations underlying an intervention does this really matter?



## News from the Quality of Life Office

Interviews have begun with women enrolled in an inter-cooperative group collaboration led by the ANZ Gynaecological Oncology Group (ANZGOG) that examines symptom benefit from palliative chemotherapy for women with recurrent ovarian cancer. Qualitative data from these interviews will contribute to the development of optimal patient-reported outcome measures for a further PoCoG collaborative, NHMRC funded study which started in January.

PoCoG's Quality of Life Office has also begun a collaboration with the Australian and New Zealand Melanoma Trials Group (ANZMTG) to develop optimal patient-reported outcome measures for Australians with melanoma. The project has received seed funding from The University of Sydney and will test the psychometric properties of existing melanoma-specific quality of life questionnaires and develop and test new, supplementary items for both people with melanoma and their families.

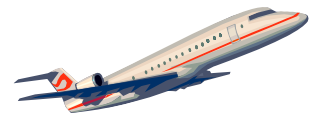
Another inter-cooperative trial group collaboration, this time with the Australian New Zealand Breast Cancer Trials Group, forms the basis for a grant submission in the current round of NHMRC and priority-driven funding. If funded, this study will determine the extent to which efficacy, short-term side-effects (diarrhoea, rash, fatigue), risk of organ toxicity (cardiac, liver), mode of administration (tablet, injection) and related convenience issues affect patient preferences for trastuzumab (Herceptin) and lapatinib as adjuvant therapy for HER2 positive early stage breast cancer.

New research projects for 2009 include a study funded by the Cancer Institute NSW which will use quality of life data routinely collected at the Cancer Therapy Centre at Liverpool Hospital for Phase 1 of a project aimed at developing multi-attribute utility instruments from the EORTC QLQ-C30 and FACT-G. Phase 2 of this project is being submitted in the current round of NHMRC and priority-driven research.

## News from the CALD studies co-ordinating office

The CALD Unmet Needs Study explores unmet needs, psychological distress, quality of life, and patterns of care in Chinese, Arabic, Greek and English speaking cancer patients, recruiting through Cancer Registries in four Australian states. We have commenced recruitment of participants through the NSW Central Cancer Registry.

We recently received funding from Cancer Australia and Beyond Blue for a companion study exploring the experiences of Chinese, Arabic and Greek-speaking patients diagnosed in the last 6 months, recruiting through oncology clinics in NSW and Victoria.



## PoCoG Travel Reimbursement Scheme 2009

PoCoG, through the generous funding from Cancer Australia is offering travel funding to its members through the PoCoG Travel Reimbursement Scheme (TRS).

The Round 1 of the 2009 PoCoG TRS closed on 30 January 2009. There was considerable interest with 14 applicants submitting applications primarily for travel to international conferences including The International Psycho-Oncology Society 11<sup>th</sup> World Congress (IPOS), the Society Behavioural Medicine Conference (SBMC) and the Conference of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO).

The review committee met on Monday 23 February 2009 to assess and rank the applications according to competitive criteria. All applications were of a very high standard and the budget allowed funding

of 7 applicants, subject to abstract acceptance. The review committee made their difficult decisions based on the criteria outlined in the TRS guidelines.

The successful applicants included experienced researchers, students and clinicians in the field of psycho-oncology, who have demonstrated the capacity to develop and participate in collaborative research, and have submitted an abstract for podium presentations. In addition, some of the applicants will be involved in other networking and research capacity building activities during their travel to the conferences, including clinical site visits.

Congratulations to the successful applicants.



## 👁 In Focus - PSYCHO-ONCOLOGY RESEARCH UNIT

The Psycho-oncology Research Unit (PRU) has been established at Peter Macallum Cancer Centre, the only stand-alone cancer centre in Australasia, to further the specialist evidence base for psychological and psychiatric care for people with cancer and their families and to innovate new psychosocial and behavioural interventions in the cancer setting. The aspiration is that the PRU will become a national centre of excellence and a hub for research and education in the psycho-oncology field modelled on similar research departments overseas such as that established at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, USA. The PRU currently consists of clinical research staff from Peter Mac's Departments of Clinical Psychology and Psychiatry.

### RESEARCH FOCUS

- Develop and drive the implementation of an overarching psycho-oncology research strategy at Peter Mac.
- Facilitate statewide and national research collaborations.
- Drive the clinical application of evidence-based improvements in psycho-oncology care.
- Raise the awareness of psycho-oncology as a collaborative field of research.
- Keep abreast of and disseminate information about new developments and resources.
- Develop education and training opportunities for clinical researchers.
- Contribute to national advocacy efforts related to survivorship research issues.
- Seek external funding to sustain and grow the Department's clinical interventions and research program.

Projects currently funded and under way:

- A grant of \$250,000 was received from *beyondblue* to perform a randomised controlled trial of Cognitive Existential Couple Therapy (CECT) with patients with early prostate cancer and their partners.
- A grant of \$95,500 was received from *beyondblue* to conduct an observational, longitudinal study of Head and Neck cancer patients.
- A grant of \$25,000 was received as a New Investigator grant from the Peter Mac Foundation to complete a pilot study of a group intervention for women with advanced breast cancer and their partners.

A grant of \$75,000 was received from the Victorian Cancer Agency (supportive care scholarship) to support a pilot intervention for breast cancer survivors

We are conducting ongoing research into communication skills training in collaboration with various partners

To contact the Psycho-Oncology Research Unit (PRU) at Peter Mac please email:

Annabel Pollard, Clinical Research Fellow [Annabel.Pollard@petermac.org](mailto:Annabel.Pollard@petermac.org)

Dr Jeremy Couper, Head Department of Psychiatry [Jeremy.Couper@petermac.org](mailto:Jeremy.Couper@petermac.org)



### COSA ASM 2009—Cancer Services and Our Community: Awareness, Access, Action.

Gold Coast Convention Centre, 17-19 November 2009

Registration and Abstract Submission: March 2009

Oral abstract submission deadline: Friday 7th August 2009

Earlybird registration deadline: Friday 28th August 2009

Poster abstract submission deadline: Friday 4th September 2009

### OZPOS/PoCoG satellite conference at COSA ASM

OZPOS and PoCoG are planning to hold a joint satellite conference to COSA ASM on 16 November 2009 to provide their members with a more dedicated research forum in the area of psycho-social research in cancer. Please look out for regular updates on this project.

## Who is Who of PoCoG – A member's profile



**Name:**

Ben Smith

**Position:**

PhD student

**Research interests:**

Testicular cancer, survivorship, decision aids, patient stories, informed consent and clinical trials, quality of life.

**Q. Tell us something about yourself**

**A.** I like rock climbing and drinking wine, although I don't recommend doing them both at once. Climbing is a great escape for me, I enjoy getting out of the city and heading up to the blue mountains on weekends. I find climbing helps clear my mind of trifling concerns like whether I can afford to buy a new TV, or if my share prices went up or down that day. When I'm on a climb it's all I'm thinking about, everything is reduced to a very primal level.

Drinking wine is the opposite, it's much more cerebral. I spend a lot of time thinking about what I'm tasting, and what aspect of the grape growing or winemaking process imbued the wine with such characters. I think wine is an amazing expression of the interaction between man and nature.

Fortunately, there are a lot of places where you can find great climbing and great wine such as the Grampians in Australia, Central Otago in New Zealand or Mendoza in Argentina. I'd love to establish a winery in one of these

regions once my long and illustrious career in psycho-oncology research is over ;-)

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

**A.** I know this isn't very original but I've got to say it's the amazing people you meet, whether they are patients, carers, clinicians or researchers.

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

**A.** Filling out ethics applications, particularly the National Ethics Application Form, which despite its' title isn't accepted in half of Australia.

**Q. Your inspiration?**

**A.** Generally, I find nature pretty inspiring. Professionally, if I achieve half as much as much as Prof Phyllis Butow then I'll be very happy.

**Q. Which movie have you seen most recently?**

**A.** The Women. At the risk of offending my mostly female colleagues by rubbishing a movie that only has women in it (that's right not a single man), it's awful. Possibly the worst movie I've ever seen.

**Q. What advice would you give to someone commencing in the same line of work as yours?**

**A.** I didn't get first class honours, which made getting a PhD position and funding difficult. However, I'm really glad I stuck with it as I think psycho-oncology is a really interesting and rewarding field to work in.

### Concept Development Workshops for Investigators

The partnership between the Cancer Institute and the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre (CTC) is sponsoring a series of Concept Development Workshops

The first of these workshops will be held in Sydney on Friday 17 April 2009. Please register your interest at the CTC by 2 April 2008 as places are limited.

The one day workshops aim to assist clinical investigators in the development of new clinical trial concepts in cancer.

The structure of the workshop will be split between an education / informative session on how to develop a concept outline for a proposed study, and a practical session of applying the principles to a specific concept that the participant will be required to bring to the workshop. The faculty will help the participant develop the concept and plan trial design, suitable target populations, outcomes and funding strategies amongst other things.

The workshop is ideal for junior investigators, trainees or professionals with limited clinical trials experience.

The subsequent workshops will be similar to the one in April, but will most likely open up to broader discipline areas (other than cancer) through the Outreach program [http://www.ctc.usyd.edu.au/trials/trial\\_support.htm](http://www.ctc.usyd.edu.au/trials/trial_support.htm) Workshops to follow in 2009:

Friday 10 July 2009

Friday 25 September 2009

For more information please click on the following link

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



## Call for Abstracts

### 16th Annual Conference of the International Society for Quality of Life Research (ISOQOL)

Integrating HRQOL in Health Care Policy, Research, and Practice  
October 28 - 31, 2009 ~ Sheraton New Orleans ~ New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

Visit [www.isoqol.org](http://www.isoqol.org) to submit online!

All submitted abstracts will undergo international double-blind per review with respect to significance and scientific quality. Preliminary information is available at the ISOQOL website [www.isoqol.org](http://www.isoqol.org). If you have any questions, please contact the ISOQOL Executive Office at [info@isoqol.org](mailto:info@isoqol.org).

Workshop Deadline – March 13, 2009 Symposium/Special Topic, Paper and Poster Deadline - May 4, 2009  
Scholarship Application deadline - May 12, 2009, Early bird registration deadline - August 17, 2009  
Workshops - October 28, 2009, Conference - October 29-31, 2009

## Useful Resources

A paper on **Assessing the Quality of Decision Support Technologies Using the International Patient Decision Aid Standards instrument (IPDASi)** is now available <http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0004705>

The IPDASi assessment service is also operational, in evaluation phase. For details - see <http://www.ipdasi.org/> Feel free to contact [ipdas@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:ipdas@cardiff.ac.uk).

## Positions vacant

### PoCoG Postdoctoral Research Associate/Research Fellow Reference No. 151317

Following the appointment of the Cancer Australia Chair in Cancer Quality of Life in 2008, and a growing research portfolio, PoCoG needs to recruit an experienced and skilled research fellow in quantitative methods and analysis.

The Research Fellow will have responsibility for the planning, design and analysis of quantitative studies and trials in psycho-oncology and specifically in cancer quality of life. The successful applicant will work collaboratively with other PoCoG members and Cooperative Trials Groups to develop new research proposals and protocols, in clinically relevant areas and in cancer quality of life.

Remuneration package Postdoc Research Associate: \$78k - 84k p.a. (which includes base salary \$66k - 71k, leave loading and 17% employer's contribution to superannuation).

Remuneration package Research Fellow: \$88k - 105k p.a. (which includes base salary \$74k - 88k, leave loading and 17% employer's contribution to superannuation).

For more information or to apply online, please visit <http://positions.usyd.edu.au> and search by reference number 151317. Specific enquiries can be directed to Fang Zhou on (02) 9036 7292.

Closing Date: 29 March 2009

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Newsletter March 2009, PoCoG publication number: EO-NL-090317