

# The Uganda Cambridge Cancer Initiative Newsletter

Issue 1 | October 2020



## Welcome!

Welcome to the first Uganda Cambridge Cancer Initiative Newsletter! Our Initiative is a collaboration between the [Uganda Cancer Institute](#) (UCI) and several different groups in Cambridge including Cambridge-Africa at the University of Cambridge UK, Cancer Research UK Cambridge Institute (CRUK CI), Cancer Research UK Cambridge Centre (CRUK CC) and Cambridge Global Health Partnerships (CGHP).



## About us

[Cambridge-Africa](#) is a University of Cambridge programme that supports African researchers and promotes mutually beneficial collaborations. Cambridge-Africa leads the coordination of the Initiative with the UCI. The UCI is a cancer treatment, research and teaching centre located in Kampala, Uganda, which has 80 beds and sees approximately 200 patients every day. The link between the UCI and Cambridge began in 2018 and has since grown into a wider network comprising of a number of research projects, collaborations and student exchanges. Read more about us on our [webpages](#).

## Follow us on social media!



Follow us [@CambridgeAfrica](#) and [@UgandaCancerIns](#). We use the hashtag [#UgandaCambridgeCancer](#) on Twitter.

## Staff Profile: Dr Suzanne Turner, University of Cambridge

Each newsletter features a member of staff or researcher who works within the Initiative. In this issue we focus on Dr Suzanne Turner, Reader in Cellular and Molecular Tumour Biology at the University of Cambridge.



Dr Turner's lab in Cambridge, which focuses on paediatric cancers including Burkitt Lymphoma (BL), has developed a strong collaboration with Dr Jackson Orem and Dr Nixon Niyonzima at the UCI. Endemic Burkitt Lymphoma (eBL) was first recognised as a form of cancer by Denis Burkitt in 1958 when he was working in Kampala, Uganda as what is now known as the UCI. BL is largely diagnosed in children and whilst it has a good prognosis in the UK with over 90% of children surviving, this is not the case in Uganda where treatment options are more limited.

The goal of the research is to therefore understand more about the biology of eBL so that tailored therapeutic approaches for children in Uganda and sub-Saharan African countries can be made. The project has made great progress including mutual exchanges at Cambridge and the UCI, developing a biobank of samples and setting up a fully functioning lab. Read more about the collaboration [here](#).

## Work in Progress: Chemotherapy Safety Improvement Project



One of the projects currently underway in the UCI - Cambridge collaboration is the Chemotherapy Safety Improvement Project. This is being undertaken by teams in the paediatric departments of both Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge and the UCI and led by Dr Joyce Balagadde Kambugu and Dr Denise Williams. The overall goal of the project is to improve chemotherapy administration safety for the children and adolescents at the Institute. The project will address the entire cycle right from chemotherapy prescription through to administration. This project was conceived following the initial visit Dr Kambugu, Head of Paediatric and Adolescent Oncology at UCI, paid to

Cambridge in May 2019 and a subsequent return visit Dr Denise Williams made to UCI in January 2020. During the discussions Dr Kambugu shared her wish to look at ways of improving chemotherapy safe administration for the children and adolescents.

The Institute has the only comprehensive paediatric and adolescent cancer treatment center in the country, with over 700 new patients in this age group annually. Being in a resource constrained setting there are a variety of factors that contribute to chemotherapy medication error including low staffing levels with overwhelming patient numbers, insufficient knowledge of proper documentation, among others. The Institute has qualified oncopharmacists, doctors (including paediatric oncologists) and paediatric nurses. There is 90% availability of the drugs on the WHO essential anticancer medicines list. All the ingredients for a robust chemotherapy safety system are available but need to be organised well. The team agreed that auditing the whole pathway in one go may be too complex and too time-consuming and that the project may be more deliverable if split into sections starting with prescription. Currently the team has embarked on auditing the chemotherapy prescription practice as baseline to determine how best to improve this within the unique context of the UCI.

## Project News

- Despite the limitations caused by COVID-19, the whole team in both Cambridge and Kampala continues to meet every six weeks via Zoom (pictured).
- A number of research projects between Cambridge University and the UCI are ongoing. These include studies looking into prostate cancer, breast cancer and Burkitt lymphoma.
- A collaborative review article for the Lancet Haematology Journal has been submitted. Authors include those from Cambridge University and the Uganda Cancer Institute.
- We are currently applying for new funding streams to enable us to expand our Initiative, strengthen our collaborative activities and create a wider and bigger network.



## Contact/Get involved!

If you would like to be involved in a collaboration please contact Polly Basak, Project Coordinator on the Uganda Cambridge Cancer Initiative, Cambridge-Africa team, University of Cambridge, UK. Email: [pab92@cam.ac.uk](mailto:pab92@cam.ac.uk)