

Welcome to the inaugural QCRI newsletter!

Here we will share news and noteworthy opportunities and celebrate successes.

If you have news to share in a future newsletter, please send it to me, bermand@queensu.ca, and to maureen.hobbs@queensu.ca.

Top of Mind

The QCRI has a unique structure that enables us to translate research from “bench to bedside to boardroom.” This mission was established by our founders and is in our Constitution.

We’re the only Canadian centre where the three research divisions -- bench research (Cancer Biology and Genetics), clinical trials (Canadian Cancer Trials Group), and population/health services research (Cancer Care and Epidemiology), work as an integrated unit under one roof. Of special note is our partnership with CCTG and its international network of more than 2,000 innovators – no other centre in Canada has this.

It makes us uniquely positioned to accelerate and implement interventions that make a difference -- reducing symptoms and deaths, improving value, lowering costs, improving access, addressing gaps, etc.

Excitingly, this vision has proven to be spectacularly successful in attracting some very distinguished cancer researchers to our Institute from around the world. Here are a few examples that I am happy to share with you:

- We welcome [Dr. Anna Panchenko](#) from the U.S. National Institutes of Health and [Dr. Amber Simpson](#) from Memorial Sloan Kettering. Both are distinguished bioinformaticians who started working at Queen’s this month and will help build unprecedented critical mass at Queen’s in this discipline. Focusing on gene structure-function (Panchenko) or medical imaging (Simpson), both delve deeply into large patient data sets to identify features of individual cancers that reveal better ways to treat them.
- Joining us in August is [Dr. Tricia Cottrell](#) from Johns Hopkins University. An OICR-funded clinician scientist in the Department of Pathology and Molecular Medicine with an appointment in CCTG, Dr. Cottrell will launch a new research program focusing on lung cancer immuno-oncology.

All of these individuals were drawn to Queen’s, in part, by opportunities to work with large sets of clinical samples, images, and genomic data generated from CCTG clinical trials patients and all three would like to see their discoveries inform new trial designs.

- In addition to these faculty recruits, [Dr. Bishal Gyawali](#) has joined Queen’s as a Fellow in the Department of Oncology and CCE. He has become a major influencer in global oncology, an exciting new focus at Queen’s that is growing rapidly. Follow him on Twitter at @oncology_bg.



Cancer is now eclipsing infectious disease as a major cause of death in low- and medium-income countries. Global oncology aims to reform the cancer care enterprise as we know it, and provides exciting opportunities for impact through innovations throughout the system, including cost-effective diagnostics, therapies, and knowledge translation.

And further integration news...

Our translational research teams have improved collaboration across divisions. Following our 2017 retreat, [Dr. Davey](#) led a thorough consultation process with potential team members that yielded teams, each focused on a different cancer type. Those are listed below, along with a contact person. Teams are multidisciplinary and include students, staff, and faculty across the Institute. If you haven't joined one, please consider doing so.

Teams (Leaders):

- Gastrointestinal cancer, ([Drs. Scott Davey](#) and [Harriet Feilotter](#))
- Lung cancer/Immuno-oncology, ([Dr. Harriet Feilotter](#))
- Leukemia/Lymphoma ([Drs. Tara Baetz](#) and [David LeBrun](#))
- Genito-Urinary Research Unit (GURU) ([Drs. David Berman](#) and [Robert Siemens](#))

Governance

Last year, our faculty ratified a revised constitution that includes new policies for Institute membership and for the composition of the Institute's Executive Management Committee (EMC). We have eliminated associate membership levels -- all members are full members. Members with office or lab space in CCTG, CCE, or CBG are members of those divisions. Other members populate the "at large" category. Each division is now represented by its own advocate on the EMC.

[Dr. Scott Davey](#) was appointed CBG director in January of this year. We will soon be recruiting a separate director for Education, an additional member at large, and a student or postdoc to join the board.

Philanthropy

We were fortunate to receive a major gift from the estate of **Franklin Clayton Weaver**, who lived and worked in Kingston and Belleville. This gift of nearly \$300,000 will pay for a number of expenses, including invited speakers in the QCRI seminar series and upcoming Institute Retreats. Additional funds have also been set aside for upgrades to the first floor conference room that should begin this summer, as well as a fund to support student travel.

Awards and Honors

[Dr. Susan Cole](#) was named [Distinguished University Professor](#), the University's highest honour for research. Dr. Cole's investigations into cell membrane proteins that transport small molecules has elucidated fundamental mechanisms of physiology and toxicology, including the biochemical basis of drug resistance.

Michael Luo and [Deyang Li](#) received “Craig Jury Memorial Summer Studentships in Cancer Research” to work with Institute faculty this summer. Michael is studying leukemia genetics with [Dr. Michael Rauh](#), and Deyang is studying tumour immunology with [Dr. Madhuri Koti](#).

Signaling a renewed commitment to its educational mission, Pathology and Molecular Medicine has created a new role. [Dr. Lois Mulligan](#) (CBG) will be the inaugural Associate Head, Education. Dr. Mulligan, who also runs a world class laboratory studying the RET oncogene, has outstanding qualifications for this role, including her roles in establishing and running the Institute’s highly successful Transdisciplinary Training Program in Cancer Research.

Faculty on the Move

Queen’s faculty moving into QCRI divisions:

CCE:

- [Dr. Andrew Robinson](#) (Oncology, co-lead of KHSC cancer trials division)
- [Dr. Karen Yeates](#) (Nephrologist, Global Health)
- [Dr. Jacqueline Galica](#) (Nursing)
- [Dr. Josee-Lyne Ethier](#) (Medical Oncology)
- [Dr. Allison Ashworth](#) (Radiation Oncology)
- [Dr. Shaila Merchant](#) (Surgical Oncology)

CBG:

- [Dr. Robert Gooding](#) (Physics)

Departures:

- [Dr. Bruce Elliott](#), (CBG, PMM, retired 2018, but still working as emeritus, with a focus on community/high school engagement)
- [Dr. Roger Deeley](#) (PMM, founding QCRI director, VP Health Sciences Research at KHSC, Vice Dean Research, FHS, Queen’s, President & CEO, KGH Research Institute), as of July 1, 2019. We are grateful for Dr. Deeley’s leadership. Please take a look [at his profile](#), describing his career and his contributions to research at Queen’s and area hospitals.
- [Dr. Martin Smoragiewicz](#) (CCTG) (2019)
- Wishing [Dr. Michael Raphael](#), a Research Fellow at CCE, all the best as he joins the faculty at The Odette Cancer Centre, Sunnybrook Hospital.

Courses and Workshops

[New Investigator Clinical Trials Course](#): This three-day course will familiarize new investigators from across the country with the essentials of clinical trial conduct in the Canadian research environment. **August 7-9, 2019**, Donald Gordon Centre, Queen’s University. [Details here.](#)

Visiting Scholars

Indo-Canadian Cancer Health Services Research Collaboration: Cancer Care and Epidemiology has welcomed on three separate occasions, visiting professors from India. The most recent was on June 5, 2019 whereby CCE welcomed [Dr. Aleyamma Mathew](#) and [Dr. Preethi George](#) from the Regional Cancer Centre in Trivandrum, Kerala, India. They have broad interests in cancer



epidemiology, etiology, and health services research. They lead a large population-based cancer registry in Kerala and also have a hospital-based registry at their cancer centre.

Recent Grants

- CIHR: [Dr. Josee-Lyne Ethier](#) (CCE), for “Real world outcomes of novel targeted agents for the treatment of metastatic HER2-positive breast cancer in Ontario: A population-based study.”
- OICR: [Dr. Tim Hanna](#) (CCE), for “Multi-gene panel testing for tailored treatment of advanced cancer in Ontario: What is the cost and benefit?” OICR also extended Dr. Hanna’s Clinician Scientist Award.

Career Opportunity

CCTG seeks a Senior Investigator. [Details here](#).

Papers

- A recent [publication](#) from Bishal Gyawali (CCE) has had a lot of buzz, including coverage [on CNN!](#)

Conference Highlights

- Watch Bishal Gyawali’s (CCE) video summary of [ASCO](#)
- CCTG plenary presentation: [Landmark clinical trial reports 33% prostate cancer survival benefit from earlier administration of an advanced hormone therapy](#)

Other CCTG presentations at ASCO

Oral Presentation: [Updated analysis and impact of plasma-detected microsatellite stability \(MSS\) and tumor mutation burden \(TMB\) in a phase II trial of durvalumab \(D\) plus tremelimumab \(T\) and best supportive care \(BSC\) versus BSC alone in patients \(pts\) with refractory metastatic colorectal carcinoma \(rmCRC\)](#)

Poster: [CCTG MA.39: Tailor RT: A randomized trial of regional radiotherapy in biomarker low-risk node-positive breast cancer \(NCT03488693\)](#).

Poster: [The effect of metformin on sex hormones in non-diabetic breast cancer patients in CCTG MA.32: A Phase III randomized adjuvant trial of metformin versus placebo in addition to standard therapy](#)

Poster: [Elevated serum activin A and PD-L1 and survival in the CCTG MA.31 phase III trial \(trastuzumab vs. lapatinib\) in first-line HER2+ metastatic breast cancer](#)

Poster: [EORTC 1709/CCTG CE.8: A phase III trial of marizomib in combination with standard temozolomide-based radiochemotherapy versus standard temozolomide-based radiochemotherapy alone in patients with newly diagnosed glioblastoma](#)