

MEDIA ALERT

EMBARGOED UNTIL Wednesday 2 November 2022

Cancer experts assemble to dismantle ageism

Australian Geriatric Oncology experts will present at the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia's Annual Scientific Meeting this week.

Ageism refers to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) towards people based on their age. Evidence suggests that over 90 per cent of individuals older than 50 experience ageism on a daily basis, with more than 50 per cent of the population accepting that they hold ageist views.

Australia's peak oncology community, the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA), is establishing itself as a leader in ageism in cancer, and will tackle the issue as part of their *Equitable care for all* Annual Scientific Meeting theme.

"We know that people who experience ageism live seven and half years shorter, have worse physical health, worse mental health, more co-morbidities and worse quality of life than people who don't experience ageism," said Dr Krasovitsky, who will present on the topic of *Language of ageism in cancer care* on Wednesday.

"Given the platform to present to COSA's multidisciplinary oncology audience, I will highlight how the often discriminatory and biased way we talk about our older patients with cancer can actually impact our approach to treating and caring for them," said Dr Krasovitsky.

One group who particularly encounter ageism is lung cancer patients, given this cohort's average age of 72 years in Australia.

"Making assumptions based on our patients' age can unfortunately lead to ill-informed clinical decision making. Patients with lung cancer often face double stigmatisation; that of their advancing age, plus the added stigma of having lung cancer, which is often considered 'self inflicted' from smoking," said A/Prof Christopher Steer, who will present on the topic of *Stigma and ageism - The challenges of delivering appropriate care to older adults with non-small cell lung cancer* on Friday.

"The solutions to combatting ageism are multifactorial and involve things like increasing older adults' participation in cancer clinical trials, education for health professionals and patients, and the more frequent use of comprehensive geriatric assessment," said A/Prof Steer.

Comprehensive geriatric assessment, which estimates the overall physical, psychological, functional and spiritual health of an older individual, ensures that treatment decisions are not based on age alone.

Dr Kheng Soo will be presenting on the topic of *Frailty through the lens of geriatric oncology* on Wednesday.

"We know that frailty is one of the most important determinants of health and health outcomes. Better knowledge of the person's frailty can guide shared decisions about cancer

treatment and personalise care by considering various patient factors beyond chronological age,” said Dr Soo.

“My recent PhD study showed that assessing for frailty in comprehensive geriatric assessments improves the quality of life and healthcare delivery for older adults starting anticancer treatment,” said Dr Soo.

“As a community, if we face our ageist biases and proactively work to reduce, even eliminate, our devaluation of older adults, we can achieve person-centred, equity-focused and evidence-based care that improves outcomes for older Australians with cancer,” said Dr Krasovitsky.

Session details

Presentation: *Frailty through the lens of geriatric oncology*

Session: Treating frailty and cancer

Presenter bio: [Dr Wee Kheng Soo](#)

When: Wednesday 2 November 1:30–3:00pm

Presentation: *Old, aged, or over the hill: the language of ageism in cancer care*

Session: The power of language

Presenter bio: [Dr Michael Krasovitsky](#)

When: Wednesday 2 November 4:00–5:30pm

Presentation: *Stigma and ageism - The challenges of delivering appropriate care to older adults with NSCLC*

Session: Stigma and cancer

Presenter bio: [Associate Professor Christopher Steer](#)

When: Friday 4 November, 11:00am–12:30pm

Where: Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

Twitter: #COSA22 @COSAOnco

A PDF of embargoed abstracts are available. For inquiries, interviews or to seek media accreditation, contact:

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About COSA

The Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA) is Australia’s peak multidisciplinary society for health professionals working in cancer research, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care. COSA is recognised as an activist organisation whose views are valued in all aspects of cancer care. We are allied with and provide high-level clinical advice to Cancer Council Australia.

COSA's Geriatric Oncology Group made a submission to Cancer Australia's Australian Cancer Plan with recommendations to improve outcomes for older Australians with cancer. [Read the submission.](#)

For more information about COSA, [see our website](#).

About the COSA Annual Scientific Meeting

The COSA Annual Scientific Meeting is Australia's premier cancer meeting, and unlike other meetings, it brings together all health professionals who work in cancer care and control – oncologists, nurses, pharmacists, allied health professionals, scientists, policy makers and more.

In 2022, the event will focus on equitable cancer care for all: gender, identity, culture, geography, and disease should not matter. Top multidisciplinary national and international speakers will present the latest research and developments in cancer to more than 800 delegates, with a focus on the science, education, health services, treatments, supportive care, and epidemiology.

2-4 November 2022
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre
[Program](#) | [Invited Speakers](#)