

MEDIA ALERT

EMBARGOED UNTIL Wednesday 2 November 2022

Multicultural cancer patients are missing out on cutting-edge treatments and care

Improving cultural diversity and inclusion in cancer clinical trials is “still an issue”, multidisciplinary health professionals will hear today at the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia’s Annual Scientific Meeting.

There is a lot of international data on the underrepresentation of minorities in clinical trials, but Australian researchers have shown this is also a major issue here – with low participation rates particularly among people who don’t speak English.

This is a key issue as Australia becomes increasingly diverse. Over 1 in 2 Australians are now either born overseas or have a parent born overseas, and more than 1 in 5 Australians speak a language other than English at home.

It’s a familiar figure, as one in two Australians will also be diagnosed with cancer by the age of 85.

Dr Ben Smith, Cancer Institute NSW Career Development Fellow at the University of New South Wales, said “This is a fundamental health equity problem, where minority or culturally and linguistically diverse cancer patients are simply not being offered the same treatment options as English-speaking patients.”

“What this means is that minority groups are missing out on the innovative, high-quality care that trials offer. Plus, as researchers, we can’t be sure that the results of clinical trials apply to the groups who aren’t represented.”

Dr Smith will present on racial disparities in cancer care and outcomes to multidisciplinary cancer health professionals in the opening plenary at the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia’s Annual Scientific Meeting today.

“It’s not that non-English speaking patients are not interested in taking part in trials. They are actually excluded due to a lack of English proficiency, or a judgment is made that enrolling them would too much time and effort,” he said.

Dr Abhijit Pal, medical oncologist at Liverpool Hospital in Sydney said “Culturally and linguistically diverse status is commonly associated with other risk factors for lower access to medical interventions – poor health literacy and low socioeconomic status, being the two key ones.”

“Any solutions to this problem need to acknowledge these barriers as well,” he said.

Dr Pal will present on the results of a national survey looking into improving access to cancer clinical trials for patients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds on Thursday and delivering equitable cancer care for all Australians on Friday.

“My survey data shows that the key areas we need to focus on are: training for medical interpreters to explain key concepts in clinical research; trial navigators to support these patients getting onto trial; and creating more translated materials,” he said.

Results from the national survey also demonstrated that there are significant barriers to the recruitment of patients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds at site, sponsor and community levels.

“Australia runs excellent and world-leading cancer clinical trials. However only a small demographic that is not representative of our diverse population are able to access them. We need to break down barriers to make them more accessible and inclusive,” said Dr Pal.

Session details

Presenter bio: [Dr Ben Smith](#)

Presentation: *Culture clash: Racial disparities in cancer care and outcomes*

Session: Unpacking inequities in cancer care

When: Wednesday 2 November 9:00–10:30am

Presenter bio: [Dr Abhijit Pal](#)

Presentation one: *Improving access to cancer clinical trials for patients from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds – results of a national survey*

Session: Best of the Best Orals – Health Equity

When: Thursday 3 November 11:00am–12:30pm

Presentation two: *Diversity, inclusion and delivering equitable cancer care for all Australians – how do we put it together in clinic next week?*

Session: Providing equitable cancer treatment and survivorship care

When: Friday 4 November 9:00–10:30am

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.

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](#)