

Quick Update:

- Membership: 727 members
- 12th COGNO ASM Save the Date!



COGNO

COOPERATIVE TRIALS GROUP
FOR NEURO-ONCOLOGY

Member Newsletter

Issue 29

Autumn 2019

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Message from our Chair



Dear COGNO members,

Welcome to the Autumn COGNO newsletter. The Australian Brain Cancer Mission has heralded a period of rapid expansion for COGNO, and the good news keeps on coming. Not only have we received funding to identify and participate in additional international trials, but two COGNO teams were successful recipients of Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) funding for two clinical trials, as announced on 15/2/19. Dr Craig Gedye is principal investigator of MAGMA: Multi-Arm GlioblastoMa Australasia trial. MAGMA will receive nearly \$2.5M over five years; there will be more information coming out to sites as we begin trial activities. Dr Hao-Wen Sim, our

very own COGNO fellow, is the PI of PICCOG: PARP and Immune Checkpoint Inhibitor Combination for relapsed IDH-mutant high-grade Glioma. PICCOG will receive nearly \$1.5M over 5 years, and fills a trial niche for this molecularly selected patient group.

Congratulations to the teams involved, and grateful thanks to the NHMRC CTC COGNO staff who had significant input into developing and budgeting these applications. These two trials will ensure that we are in a position to offer research participation to many more of the 1000+ Australians diagnosed with GBM each year. There is much work to be done, and we expect to be reaching out to sites later in the year to explore participation.

At the beginning of March, I was privileged to attend the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre 30th Anniversary celebrations in Sydney. This was a wonderful opportunity to honour the achievements and collaborations of the Centre, as well as the founding Director, Professor John Simes, who has also played such an important role in COGNO as the Deputy Chair of our Management Committee for a number of years. It was great to have the opportunity to highlight some COGNO activities during the day and to catch up more informally with some COGNO members and staff during the day and evening function.

I would also like to warmly congratulate two of our members for their recognition in the 2019 Australia Day Honours list. A/Prof Kate Drummond AM has been involved with COGNO from its inception, and was recognised for significant service to medicine in the field of neuro-oncology, and to community health. Professor Catriona McLean AO was recognised for distinguished service to medicine in the field of academic and clinical neuropathology, and as a role model and mentor. It's wonderful to see Kate and Catriona honoured for their contributions to their fields in neuro-oncology, we can be very proud of their association with COGNO and the role modelling and mentoring they provide to other COGNO members.

Professor Anna Nowak
Group Chair



Anna Nowak and some COGNO members at the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre 30th Anniversary celebrations

GETTING TO KNOW KATE DRUMMOND AM



Associate Professor Kate Drummond is on the COGNO Scientific Advisory Committee.

Why did you become involved in COGNO?

You know I can't really remember how I got involved in COGNO, but I suspect that it had something to do with Mark Rosenthal telling me I should. I just remember that I was there from the beginning and we thought it was a great idea to achieve some coordinated research and clinical trials for our brain tumour patients to give them the same opportunities as patients overseas. We also thought it was also going to be a fantastic vehicle for bringing interested people together and achieve national collaboration and networking.

Why are you still a COGNO member?

Well for all the same reasons - I think COGNO has been enormously successful in creating a cohesive, collaborative, and multidisciplinary group of neuro-oncology experts who have run some fantastic clinical trials and fostered, sponsored, and encouraged other research to hopefully improve the length and quality of life of our patients.

Why did you become a neurosurgeon and what triggered your interest in neuro-oncology research?

I became a neurosurgeon by accident. I actually wanted to be an obstetrician but after I delivered my first baby as a medical student I decided that I NEVER wanted to do that again! So as a medical student I turned to surgery and thought I would be a general surgeon. As an intern I was keen to do a rotation in general surgery at Blacktown Hospital in Sydney and to do that rotation I had to also take a rotation in neurosurgery, in which I had absolutely no interest. However, I loved the term, and the first brain tumour patient I saw, a very unfortunate woman with a craniopharyngioma, cemented my interest in caring for patients with brain tumours, which has never waned since that day. The sometimes poor outcomes in neuro-oncology do not put me off caring for these patients, as I think being part of that difficult process is a very important part of being a neurosurgical oncologist, but my interest in neuro-oncology research is a natural extension of this experience - to improve care for our patients.

What do you find the most challenging about your work and what is most rewarding?

Well that is really two sides of the same coin. As I mentioned above, the outcomes for our patients are sometimes not great and these patients really have a double whammy. They not only have cancer, but they also have a disabling disease of the brain, which often means they fall through the cracks between oncology and neurology/neurosurgery. The care for these complex patients is incredibly challenging and sometimes incredibly sad, but also extremely rewarding and an absolute privilege to be allowed to participate in. I wouldn't change anything for the world.

How do you stay motivated to continue in your role?

It is the patients that keep me motivated in my role. Every time I think I am having a bad day I will meet someone who is clearly acting with much greater grace and persistence than I in a much worse situation and it tells me to "get over myself" and move on. I find that incredibly motivating.

What is a typical day?

My day starts at 5:00am and by 6:00am I am generally in the office getting my "golden hour" of paperwork done before the rest of the world starts harassing me. At 7:00am I hit the wards for a ward round which takes anywhere between 30 to 60 minutes, and then the real day will start. This on Mondays will be a full day of outpatients clinic (sigh) including our wonderful Multidisciplinary Neuro-oncology Clinic and a Multidisciplinary Team Meeting, with general neurosurgery clinic in the afternoon. I operate all day on Tuesdays, I consult all day in private on Wednesdays, and on Thursdays and Fridays I manage to fit in more paperwork, administration, research, and occasional emergency cases. I usually do a shorter ward round of sick patients in the evening. I do bedside teaching and my private operating on Saturdays and generally do paperwork in the evening. I know, I am an idiot.

What do you do in my spare time?

My spare time is created mostly by what I don't do - I don't waste time commuting and live close enough to work so it is not have that drain on my life. I don't watch television at all - or even own one. I do however make sure I get out to see regular live plays and movies. I also enjoy eating out and travelling is really my biggest joy. Even though I work like a dog when I am work, I make sure I take my leave to travel to interesting places.

What are you looking forward to in 2019?

The Boston Red Sox winning the World Series again!

What are three things you want to achieve in 2019?

The three things would be:

1. Finish decorating my house, I only moved in three years ago after all!
2. Consolidate and expand a truly multidisciplinary world class Neurofibromatosis Clinic at The Royal Melbourne Hospital.
3. Develop a world leading neoadjuvant/phase 0 trial for glioblastoma.

What does your work in community health involve?

I think you might mean my work with Pangea Global Health Education. I am chair of an organisation that provides education in medical and nursing skills in developing countries. We have a focus on surgical and critical care medicine and nursing as well as foetal maternal medicine. Every year we take a dedicated group of surgeons, nurses, and other practitioners to Malawi and Zimbabwe to undertake intensive practical small group seminars. This is enormously rewarding and we are hoping to expand into new sites in Asia and eventually become the leaders in global health education in low and middle income countries.

SAVE THE DATE: 12th COGNO ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING (ASM)

Sunday 27th October - Tuesday 29th October 2019, Sydney, Australia

Confirmed international speakers:



Professor Colin Watts
Professor of Neurosurgery
Chair Birmingham Brain
Cancer Program
University of Birmingham
Institute of Cancer and
Genomic Sciences
College of Medical and
Dental Sciences
United Kingdom



Associate Professor Helen Shih
Chief, CNS & Eye Services,
Department of Radiation
Oncology
Medical Director, MGH
Proton Therapy Centers
Director, Proton Therapy
Fellowship
Massachusetts General
Hospital
USA

Stay posted for further updates, or email cognoasm@ctc.usyd.edu.au to join our mailing list.

COGNO YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARD REPORT

Many thanks to COGNO for their recognition of the potential of this study.

The work presented at COGNO this year described the baseline functional capacity of glioma patients prior to commencing radiotherapy across the Liverpool and Princess Alexandra Hospitals in Australia. This study is part of a larger study that is investigating the feasibility of an exercise intervention in patients with glioma undergoing radiotherapy with or without chemotherapy. Baseline assessments were performed on all patients after initial surgery, assessments were used to develop an individualised exercise program for each participant. Eligibility criteria included histologically-confirmed glioma, age \geq 18 years, performance status ECOG 0-2 and intention to receive adjuvant radiotherapy.

Assessments conducted included six-minute walk, single leg balance and thirty second sit-to-stand tests and were conducted by either a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist associated with the study. Assessments conducted were selected due to their ability to assess functional capacity. Comparisons to healthy controls were made to determine if surgery had any effect on functional capacity. At the time of presenting 28 participants had undergone baseline assessment. Median age was 50.5 years (range 28-72) and 68% were male. Mean height 175cm and weight 84.4kg with body mass index of 27 (indicating 'overweight'). Histologic diagnosis was WHO grade IV, III and II in 82%, 11% and 7% participants, respectively. Performance in six minute walk test was below normal healthy aged-matched normative values for all ages indicating reduced exercise capacity. For patients \geq 60 years, slower timed up and go and reduced thirty second sit to stand suggest balance deficits and potential increased falls risk.

Currently the study is ongoing and in the final stages of recruiting for the exercise arm. In addition to functional assessment, the study is also collecting data on quality of life using the European Organisation for Research and Treatment of Cancer QLQ-C30 with supplementary BN-20, cognitive function, fatigue, distress and sleep quality. We hope to demonstrate that an individualised exercise program is feasible and safe throughout treatment and is able to maintain quality of life and fatigue levels throughout treatment. The study seeks to further exercise intervention as an affordable and universal symptom management option.

Mr Ali Dulfikar, recipient of the 2018 COGNO Young Investigator Award Report

GETTING TO KNOW COGNO'S MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Professor Bryan Day is a current member of the COGNO Management Committee. Bryan heads the Sid Faithfull Brain Cancer Laboratory at QIMR Berghofer MRI where he and his team focus on the most common and aggressive form of adult brain cancer, Glioblastoma (GBM) and the most common brain cancer in children, Medulloblastoma. As a past Director for the Australian Society of Medical Research (ASMR), he is passionate about maintaining the ongoing success and sustainability of medical research in Australia. Among his achievements has been the development of a brain tumour bank at QIMR Berghofer and defining the receptor EphA3 as a therapeutic target in GBM.

What is your role on the COGNO Management Committee?

As a non-clinical research scientist my role on the COGNO Management Committee is to advise on scientific aspects relating to clinical trial design. I take this role very seriously and always try to ensure that the scientific basis behind a proposed trial is sound and valid. I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience on the committee thus far, and have been greatly impressed by the breadth and depth of knowledge of my fellow committee members.

How did you become involved in COGNO?

I was first invited to speak at the Annual Scientific Meeting in Sydney in 2011. I was inspired by the small but passionate group of neurosurgeons, clinicians and researchers who attended the meeting. COGNO has grown significantly since that time and is now the peak neuro-oncology body in the country. COGNO has been vital in raising the profile of brain cancer in Australia and bringing together like-minded people behind a common cause of significance.

How did your interest in cancer eventuate?

In the early days of my career I was working as a nutritionist at the Wesley Private Hospital in Brisbane. I saw first-hand the suffering cancer patients went through during their treatment. This had a profound impact upon me. Coincidentally, at the time my German and Scottish rock climbing friends, who also happened to be scientists, encouraged me to take the leap into a research career! Looking back, this was definitely great advice and I have enjoyed a challenging and rewarding career ever since.

What would you like to achieve through your work?

I strive every day to continue to build an internationally competitive translational research program at QIMR Berghofer in both adult and paediatric brain cancer. My focus and commitment is to investigate the biological processes critical for the development of these cancers and bring these basic findings to clinical trial. I also feel a great sense of achievement when I am to help my staff and students do well and achieve their goals.

What do you find most challenging about your work, and most rewarding?

Brain cancer is really a very tough 'nut to crack'. Despite our best efforts we are yet to make a big leap forward in patient outcomes, this especially true for patients suffering from glioblastoma. I am always hopefully that a breakthrough will come in the near future. I give my best every day and try to stay focussed on research with real outcomes for patients suffering from these terrible diseases. It is extremely rewarding when all the little pieces of the puzzle come together and you see all your hard effort result in a tangible break-through.

What do you do in your 'spare' time?

I love to go mountain biking on the weekend with friends when the opportunity arises. Also, I am currently digging a workshop under my house. I may have slightly overestimated the scope of the job somewhat - I have been digging for about 18 months and am only about half done - I'll get there one day!

STUDY & TRIAL UPDATES

ACED (COGNO14/02): Phase II randomised placebo-controlled, double blind, multisite study of acetazolamide versus placebo for management of cerebral oedema in recurrent and/or progressive HGG requiring treatment with dexamethasone

All ACED sites are now open for recruitment - welcome to Dr Cecelia Gzell and her team at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney!

Congratulations to the teams at Royal Brisbane & Women's Hospital and Royal Hobart Hospital for recruiting the first 2 participants in 2019! Screening and recruitment are ongoing. Please email aced@ctc.usyd.edu.au if you have any queries.

ACED – PARTICIPATING SITE STATUS						
No	Site Name	State	Principal Investigator	Site Status	Site Activation	# Patients randomised
1	Liverpool Hospital	NSW	Eng-Siew Koh	Active	24-Jun-2016	13
2	Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital	QLD	Zarnie Lwin	Active	30-Sep-2016	4
3	St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne	VIC	Anthony Dowling	Active	14-Nov-2016	2
4	Epworth Healthcare	VIC	Ross Jennens	Active	20-Feb-2017	0
5	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital	WA	Anna Nowak	Active	04-Apr-2017	3
6	Royal Hobart Hospital	TAS	Rosemary Harrup	Active	28-Aug-2017	2
7	Prince of Wales Hospital	NSW	Elizabeth Hovey	Active	16-Nov-2017	1
8	Chris O'Brien Lifehouse	NSW	Hao-Wen Sim	Active	12-Dec-2017	1
9	Flinders Medical Centre	SA	Ganessan Kichenadasse	Active	17-Jan-2018	0
10	St George Hospital	NSW	Tracey Dunlop	Active	14-Feb-2018	0
11	St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney	NSW	Cecelia Gzell	Active	20-Dec-2018	0
Total Recruitment						26

NUTMEG (COGNO 16/01): A Randomised Phase II Study of Nivolumab and Temozolomide vs Temozolomide alone in newly diagnosed Elderly patients with Glioblastoma (NUTMEG)

The NUTMEG trial aims to recruit 102 patients across 18 sites. Currently 13 out of the 18 selected sites have opened to recruitment, with 24 patients randomised onto the NUTMEG trial across all sites as of the 20th February 2019.

The NUTMEG Trial Coordinator is more than happy to provide any information that you may require on this study. Please email nutmeg@ctc.usyd.edu.au if you have any queries.

NUTMEG - PARTICIPATING SITE STATUS							
No	Site name	State	Principal Investigator	Site status	Site activation	# Patients registered	# Patients enrolled
1	Royal North Shore Hospital	NSW	Michael Back	Active	22/02/2018	13	11
2	Prince of Wales Hospital	NSW	Elizabeth Hovey	Active	04/09/2018	0	0
3	Chris O'Brien Lifehouse	NSW	John Simes	Active	29/06/2018	1	0
4	Gosford Hospital	NSW	Matthew Wong	Active	18/09/2018	1*	1
5	Campbelltown Hospital	NSW	Annette Tognela	Active	19/02/2018	4	4
6	Port Macquarie Hospital	NSW	Stephen Begbie	Active	21/1/2019	1	0
7	Newcastle Private Hospital	NSW	Craig Gedye	Active	27/03/2018	1	1
8	Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre	VIC	Kathryn Field	Active	28/08/2018	1	1
9	Epworth Healthcare	VIC	Ross Jennens	Active	10/09/2018	2	2
10	Austin Hospital	VIC	Hui Gan	Start up	Pending	N/A	N/A
11	Monash Medical Centre	VIC	Sagun Parakh	Start up	Pending	N/A	N/A
12	Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital	QLD	Zarnie Lwin	Active	19/02/2018	3	3
13	Princess Alexandra Hospital	QLD	Katharine Cuff	Active	28/05/2018	1	1
14	ICON Cancer Care Wesley	QLD	Paul Eliadis	Start up	Pending	N/A	N/A
15	Flinders Medical Centre	SA	Ganessan Kichenadasse	Start up	Pending	N/A	N/A
16	Royal Adelaide Hospital	SA	Hien Vinh Le	Active	22/1/2019	0	0
17	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital	WA	Anna Nowak	Start up	Pending	N/A	N/A
18	Royal Hobart Hospital	TAS	Rosemary Harrup	Active	31/05/2018	0	0
Total recruitment						28	24

*Includes patient's transferred from other sites

VERTU (COGNO 14/01): Veliparib, Radiotherapy and Temozolomide trial in Unmethylated MGMT Glioblastoma. A Randomised Phase II study of veliparib + radiotherapy (RT) with adjuvant temozolomide (TMZ) + veliparib versus standard RT + TMZ followed by TMZ in patients with newly diagnosed glioblastoma (GBM) with unmethylated O (6)-methylguanine-DNA methyltransferase (MGMT)

Recruitment for the VERTU study closed on 17th of October 2018 with 128 participants randomised onto the trial across Australia. We recruited over the recruitment target of 120 participants to cover some ineligible patients.

We are continuing to follow participants both on treatment and in the follow-up phase of the study until the study endpoints have been reached. The VERTU Trial Coordinator is more than happy to provide any information that you may require on this study. Please email vertu@ctc.usyd.edu.au if you have any queries.

CATNON (EORTC 26053-22054): Phase III trial on concurrent and adjuvant Temozolomide chemotherapy in non-1p/19q deleted anaplastic glioma

Recruitment for the CATNON study closed on 17 Sep 2015 with 751 patients randomised internationally (1407 registered), and 82 randomised in Australia (191 registered); this represents approximately 11% of total trial accrual and is a great contribution to the global effort.

An abstract for ASCO 2019 has been submitted on the results of the molecular analysis. Thank you to all sites involved in resolving the recent EORTC data queries and biospecimen acquisition for the subset of patients with depleted samples to undergo the translational work.

We are continuing to work with the EORTC during the long-term follow-up phase until all study endpoints are reached. The CATNON Trial Coordinator is more than happy to provide any information that you may require on this study. Please email catnon@ctc.usyd.edu.au with any queries.



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MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Prof Anna Nowak (Chair)
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Prof Bryan Day
Ms Marcia Fleet
Dr Sanjeev Gill
Dr Cecelia Gzell
A/Prof Rosemary Harrup
Prof Terry Johns
Dr Ganessan Kichenadasse
Ms Robyn Leonard
Dr Jonathon Parkinson
Mrs Desma Spyridopoulos

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Dr Eng-Siew Koh (Deputy Chair)
Dr Liz Hovey (Treasurer)
Ms Liz Barnes
Ms Candace Carter
Ms Jenny Chow
A/Prof Hui Gan
Mrs Merryn Hall
A/Prof Georgia Halkett
Dr Mustafa Khasraw
Dr Hao-Wen Sim

COGNO Coordinating Centre
NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre
Locked Bag 77
Camperdown NSW 1450
T: +61 2 9562 5000
F: +61 2 9562 5094
E: cogno@ctc.usyd.edu.au

NEW CONCEPTS/TRIALS IN DEVELOPMENT

Do you have an idea for a potential study?

The COGNO SAC (Scientific Advisory Committee) meets via teleconference 3 times a year, and hosts an open, face-to-face meeting during the COGNO ASM. During the SAC meeting, new protocols are presented both by the proposer and also by the COGNO-appointed scientific and consumer reviewer/s before a wider discussion by the Committee.

There are also opportunities to bring new ideas to COGNO throughout the year, including bringing nascent ideas to our annual Ideas Generation Workshop on 24 May 2019.

If you have a great idea you are welcome to contact the COGNO SAC to discuss how we can assist in concept development.

If you become aware of a funding opportunity during the year which might be of relevance to COGNO, or for which you would like to involve COGNO in your application, please do let us know! Under these circumstances, we can facilitate urgent COGNO SAC review and COGNO input to assist you in refining your proposal, building your team, and hopefully improving your chances of a successful application.

If you require any further information please email candace.carter@ctc.usyd.edu.au.

A/Prof Hui Gan and Dr Eng-Siew Koh, on behalf of the COGNO SAC and COGNO community

2019 COGNO IDEAS GENERATION WORKSHOP

COGNO will be hosting an Ideas Generation Workshop on Friday 24 May 2019, in Sydney. The workshop will be targeted at identifying areas of unmet need in relation to neuro-oncology clinical trials in Australia and globally. If you have ideas relating to gaps in current knowledge, or ideas for future clinical trials in neuro-oncology we would like to hear from you. Please send up to 1 paragraph outlining your idea(s) to cogno@ctc.usyd.edu.au by 5pm on Thursday 11 April 2019.

Submissions are welcome from all disciplines, and at any stage of development. If you would like to discuss your idea prior to submission please feel free to contact Candace Carter (COGNO Development Program Manager) at candace.carter@ctc.usyd.edu.au or on (02) 9562 5092.

COGNO STAFF UPDATE



We welcome Tracy Liaw to the COGNO Clinical Trials team at the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre. Tracy has a medical science background and previously worked at patient and healthy volunteer recruiting sites for clinical trials of Phase 1 to early -expansion-access program. She covered and managed trial activities from study startup to participant recruitment and study closure. Tracy will be the new Trial Coordinator on a recently funded trial called PersoMed, which is looking at personalised targeted therapy for adolescent and adults with medulloblastoma.



We welcome back Tara Flores who has recently returned from maternity leave. Prior to her leave, Tara was the ACED Trial Coordinator. Tara is currently working as a data manager on the VERTU trial.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

COGNO now has 727 members! Help us expand our Group's expertise and networking capacity. If you know someone who would like to join, you can refer prospective members to our online membership application on our website (www.cogno.org.au) or office (cogno@ctc.usyd.edu.au).

UPDATE FROM QOL OFFICE

We are pleased to announce that the Sydney Quality of Life (QOL) Office is now on twitter [@SydneyQOLO](https://twitter.com/SydneyQOLO). Follow us to receive regular updates on workshops, events, and resources available to Cancer Clinical Trials Group (CCTG) members, such as COGNO members.

The QOL Office will be running two [training workshops](#) on 17th May 2019 for CCTG members. The first workshop introduces the SPIRIT-PRO checklist, a practical tool for guiding protocol development for the patient-reported outcomes (PRO) components of trials. The second workshop will cover trial conduct, specifically on the administration of PRO measures to optimise PRO data quality and minimise missing PRO data.

If you are unable to attend a workshop in person, CCTG members can join the live webinars covering the presentation content for both workshops. Visit our QOL Office Workshop [webpage](#) for more information on how to register.

CCTG members can also access a number of excellent QOL/PRO research [resources](#) available on the [QOL Office website](#).

Staff at the QOL Office are available to answer any [online queries](#) from CCTG members regarding the QOL/PRO aspects of their clinical research.

REMINDERS

- Cancer Achievement Award 2019: the Medical Oncology Group of Australia and Novartis Oncology Cancer Achievement Award recognises outstanding contributions made by scientists, clinicians and other health professionals to cancer research and control in Australia. Closing date 26 April 2019, <https://moga.org.au/page/cancer-achievement-award>.
- Structured Pathology Reporting of Cancer Project Newsletter: the March 2019 issue is now available on <https://www.rcpa.edu.au/Library/Practising-Pathology/Structured-Pathology-Reporting-of-Cancer/Newsletters>
- 9 - 10 May 2019: 4th Victorian Integrated Cancer Services Conference, Melbourne, <https://vics2019.org/>
- 23 - 24 May 2019: Brain Tumor Meeting, Berlin, Germany, <https://www.braintumor-berlin.de/>
- 31 May - 4 June 2019: ASCO Annual Meeting, Chicago, USA, <https://meetings.asco.org/am/register-submit-abstracts>
- 14 - 16 Aug 2019: MOGA Annual Scientific Meeting, Canberra <https://moga.org.au/conference/annual-scientific-meeting>
- 21 - 23 Aug 2019: AGITG 21st Annual Scientific Meeting, Adelaide, <https://asm.gicancer.org.au/>
- 2-5 Oct 2019: ACTA International Clinical Trials Conference, Sydney, <https://www.clinicaltrialsconference.com.au/>
- 27 - 29 Oct 2019: 12th COGNO Annual Scientific Meeting, Sydney, <https://cogno.org.au/content.aspx?page=cognoasm-home>
- 20 - 24 Nov 2019: SNO Annual Meeting, Phoenix, USA, <https://www.soc-neuro-onc.org/SNO/2019Annual/2019AnnualHome.aspx>



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COGNO CONTACTS

Candace Carter

COGNO Development Program
Manager

(Mon-Fri)

E: candace.carter@ctc.usyd.edu.au

T: (02) 9562 5092

Merryn Hall

COGNO Operations Program
Manager

(Mon-Wed)

E: merryn.hall@ctc.usyd.edu.au

T: (02) 9562 5023

Lauren Fisher

VERTU & NUTMEG Trial
Coordinator

(Mon-Fri)

E: vertu@ctc.usyd.edu.au

E: nutmeg@ctc.usyd.edu.au

T: (02) 9562 5372

Evonne Tim

ACED Trial Coordinator
(Mon-Fri)

E: aced@ctc.usyd.edu.au

T: 02 8036 5264

Marzena Kelly

CATNON Trial Coordinator
(Mon, Wed-Fri)

E: catnon@ctc.usyd.edu.au

T: 02 9562 5375

Tara Flores

VERTU Data Manager
(Mon-Wed)

E: vertu@ctc.usyd.edu.au

T: 9562 5398

Tracy Liaw

PersoMed Trial Coordinator
(Mon-Fri)

E: PersoMed@ctc.usyd.edu.au

T: 9562 5094

Mustafa Khasraw

CTC Clinical Lead for COGNO

E: mustafa.khasraw@ctc.usyd.edu.au

Hao-Wen Sim

COGNO Research Fellow

E: hao-wen.sim@ctc.usyd.edu.au

Jenny Chow

Executive Officer

(Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri)

E: cognoeo@ctc.usyd.edu.au

T: (02) 9562 5389

Yi Feng

Admin Assistant

(Tue-Thu)

E: yi.feng@ctc.usyd.edu.au

T: (02) 8036 5238

Mythily Sachchithanathan

BCBA Project Coordinator

(Mon-Wed)

E: bcba@bcba.org.au

T: (03) 8572 2544