

Spring 2023 & 20th Anniversary Edition

GOOD NEWS

Gynaecological Oncology News



Message from QCGC Research Director

Celebrating 20 years of exceptional research!

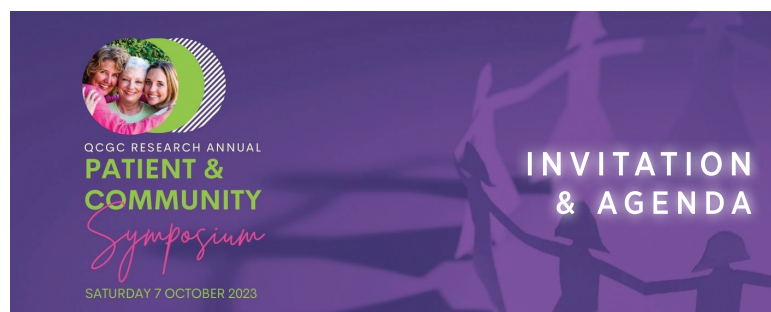


We have come a long way in 20 years, and the path has been far from linear, with many twists and turns, highs and lows. The recent announcement of federal funding for ENDO-3 in our twentieth year is poignant because I remember, like it

was yesterday, the struggle to get early funding support for our research.

The fact that QCGC Research is thriving today is testimony to the people who have stuck with us. I am eternally grateful because they have enabled us to save and improve women's lives through research. First, thanks to the people who put their faith in QCGC Research. I include the Cherish Women's Cancer Foundation, which helped kick-start critical projects and still supports our work. Second, to the dedicated QCGC Research team, who have shared my vision and passion to do things differently and devoted years to QCGC Research, including in tough times. Third, to the volunteers who willingly join our trials, knowing the research may not benefit them but will help women in the future. Finally, my family who had no choice but to get involved, and they still cheer for QCGC Research and support my fundraising adventures, like the upcoming Mt Kilimanjaro trek. Twenty years may seem like a long time – but it's not in research, and despite our best efforts, gynaecological cancer is still under-researched. We have a lot of work to get on with, and there's no stopping us now. We look forward to sharing the coming decades with you.

Professor Andreas Obermair



Patient and Community Symposium 2023

On Saturday, 7 October 2023, we invite you to celebrate 20 years of gynaecological cancer research at our Patient and Community Symposium. This is a rare opportunity to hear about the latest research first-hand and share your experience with other women and health professionals. Local and international speakers will cover topics including the cervical cancer elimination initiative, immunotherapy, importance of clinical trials in the cancer journey and life with vulval cancer.

Thank you to GSK Australia and Cherish Women's Cancer Foundation for supporting this event.

Date: Saturday, 7 October 2023

Time: 9:00 am to 2:00 pm (morning tea and lunch provided)

Cost: Free

Venue: ES Meyers Lecture Theatre, Mayne Medical School Building
The University of Queensland, 288 Herston Road, Herston, QLD

Parking: Free parking available (details provided upon registration)

Presentations

Cervical Cancer Elimination initiative Is it achievable or not?

Dr Rene Pareja, Dr Tamara Butler,
Professor Andreas Obermair

Importance of clinical trials for patients Annie Ellis

Tea break

Research Update

Professor Andreas Obermair

Living with Vulval Cancer

Anne Mellon

Lunch break

Immunotherapy Demystified

Professor Clare Scott

International research we need to know about!

Dr Kris Moloney

Please register for the
symposium by scanning
the QR-code below.



or visit our
website



e.capaldi@uq.edu.au

UQ GIVING DAY

Double your impact this Giving Day

Giving day is a 24-hour online fundraising movement where The University of Queensland asks alumni and the community to make a gift towards a cause they are passionate about. This year, UQ Giving Day will take place on Wednesday 18 October, and the Queensland Centre for Gynaecological Cancer will be featured as a fundraising priority.

There are many ways you can be involved in this exciting event, and we would love to have your support. You could join us as an Ambassador who will promote and share our work and stories; host a fundraising morning tea or set a fundraising challenge for your friends and family; or make a donation on the day.

The best part is, all donations made to QCGC from the 4 to 18 of October will be doubled thanks to our Giving Day partner, Cherish Women's Cancer Foundation! Cherish has generously agreed to match all donations up to the total value of \$10,000 and we are so grateful for their partnership.

Together, we are going to find better and kinder treatments for all gynaecological cancers and change lives for the better.

If you would like to be involved with Giving Day, please contact Lucy Reid on 0417 565 286 or lucy.reid@uq.edu.au, or visit our website www.gyncan.org under Events.

\$3M national funding for ENDO-3

QCGC Research has secured three million dollars from the Australian Government for ENDO-3 through the NHMRC 2022 Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies Grant. ENDO-3 is an international clinical trial investigating the benefits of lymph node removal during surgery for Stage 1 endometrial cancer. Currently, doctors perform a hysterectomy and a lymph node dissection under one anaesthetic, but the benefit of removing lymph nodes in early-stage endometrial cancer has never been shown. Doctors and patients are concerned this surgery may cause 'more harm than good'. ENDO-3 will directly address these concerns and establish the benefits or harms of this surgery, reducing the potential for overtreatment. You can read more about ENDO-3 on our website under 'Current trials.'



Bolted – Glam-packed and horse free!

BOLTED

A Kinder Cup Day

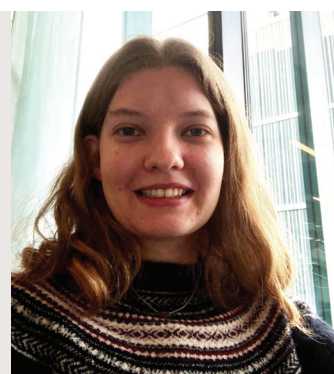


Bolted is a fun, exciting and surprising alternative Melbourne Cup event that raises funds for two worthy causes, QCGC Research and RSPCA (Qld). The event is on Tuesday, 7 November, in the Grand Ballroom at The Calile Hotel, Fortitude Valley, Queensland. Last year, QCGC Research received \$20,000 for gynaecological cancer research from the event. In 2023, we invite you to help Jane Grealy and the team smash this result! Tickets are available now at bolted.com.au. We can't wait to see you there!

Welcome to our new research fellow

In June 2023, Dr Zoe West joined the QCGC Research team as a Research Fellow. Zoe was inspired to work for QCGC Research because of its strong link to clinical practice and our research's immediate translation potential. "This is not common in research," Zoe said. "I'm also looking forward to meeting our consumers. It is great to have our research backed by past patients and relatives, which is not something I have experienced in my previous research."

Originally from Canberra, Zoe did her science degree and PhD in Brisbane. She also worked in Sweden on children's cancer research before joining our team. When she's not researching, Zoe is an avid crafter, making cards and creating designs with Cricut.



Celebrating 20 years of research highlights

Over the past 20 years, QCGC Research has advanced the world's knowledge of gynaecological cancer and its treatment, staying true to its mission to develop the best possible standard of care for women. The following three trials have revolutionised how doctors treat women with gynaecological cancer. In addition to these trials, our team has run many smaller research trials that have enhanced the quality of life for women with gynaecological cancer or expanded the skills of the health professionals looking after them.

LACE

QCGC Research's first major international trial, LACE, compared minimally invasive laparoscopic (keyhole) hysterectomy for early-stage endometrial cancer with the traditional, 'open' surgery approach. After 15 years of research involving 760 women, LACE proved that laparoscopic surgery is the preferred treatment option, offering the same survival rates and recurrence risk but reducing pain, complications and the length of hospital stays and improving recovery time. To read more, see the story on our website *Worldwide trial proves new standard of care for uterine cancer patients should be implemented* (18 March 2017).



LACC

After the positive results of LACE, the team anticipated similar outcomes for the LACC trial, which investigated the treatment of early-stage cervical cancer using minimally invasive (keyhole) surgery versus traditional open surgery. Co-managed by MD Anderson Cancer Center and QCGC Research, the trial involved 33 gynaecological oncology centres in 14 countries and enrolled 631 women. In December 2017, when the data started to show significant adverse outcomes, the trial closed to recruitment. After a decade of research, LACC proved that minimally invasive (keyhole) surgery was not the best treatment option for early-stage



cervical cancer. To read more about this trial, see the story on our website, *Laparoscopic hysterectomies not the answer* (1 November 2018) and *What happens when you discover unexpected results in research* (18 December 2018).

feMMe

During the LACE trial, the team found that even with laparoscopic surgery for early-stage endometrial cancer, obese women are at a higher risk of experiencing surgical complications. This discovery contributed to the feMMe trial, with initial funding support from the Cherish Women's Cancer Foundation. feMMe aimed to treat women with endometrial cancer less invasively using the Mirena, an intra-uterine device (IUD), and an anti-diabetes drug, Metformin or weight loss treatment. The research team recruited 165 women for the trial, with the last patient enrolled in April 2020. Following its initial results, feMMe has evolved into a new study – feMMe Molecular, which aims to gather evidence to determine which women benefit from this non-surgical approach and which do not. To read more about feMMe, see our website.



From helping women on the ward to women worldwide

Clinical trial manager Vanessa Behan has worked alongside QCGC Research Director Professor Andreas Obermair for 16 years. Vanessa started her career as a gynaecological oncologist nurse, but while on maternity leave, Andreas convinced her that research was a more rewarding career path. In 2007, Vanessa joined QCGC Research. Since then, she has experienced many of the highs and lows of the unit's growth. She is now the clinical trial manager for ENDO-3. Vanessa said she has stayed part of QCGC Research for so long because the team is united by passion and inspired by Andreas' leadership. "Andreas has an unwavering drive and so many brilliant ideas. As a clinician and a researcher, he does not want to just continue with what's been done in the past," Vanessa said. "I have learnt more about gynaecological cancer than I ever would have as a ward nurse, and I know our research is helping women on a grand scale. Who wouldn't want to be part of that?" To read Vanessa's full story, please see her blog on our website.

Expanding consumer-led research

As the name suggests, consumer-led research is driven by consumers. Consumers' priorities, needs, values and experiences shape a research agenda that delivers meaningful outcomes to consumers. While our research has always been focused on patient benefits, QCGC Research's first official consumer-led research group met in March 2023. They have worked together on a vulvar cancer project, preparing a manuscript titled: *Patients' experiences of vulvar cancer diagnosis and treatment: results from a consumer-guided qualitative study*. The group is waiting to hear if an international journal has accepted their manuscript. They hope its publication will help inform future vulvar cancer research.



Celebration of 20 memorable years



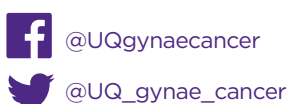
Please consider
making a tax-deductible
DONATION

Making a difference this financial year

While our endometrial cancer research received a much-appreciated boost recently with the Investigator Grant, in reality, this is a drop in the ocean of funds required to conduct robust clinical trials into ALL types of gynaecological cancer. As the end of the year approaches, please consider making a tax-deductible donation, bit.ly/QCGCDonation, 100 per cent of which will support trials that improve survival rates, treatments and ways to detect and prevent this disease.

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