

African aWAreness of CANcer and Early Diagnosis (AWACAN-ED) Network e-Newsletter

June 2022

We hope that 2022 has been an amazing year for you. Since our last newsletter in the third quarter of 2021, we have received additional funding and there have been significant and exciting changes to the current and future direction of the 'AWACAN Network'. In this newsletter, we are delighted to share these exciting updates with you and what they imply for the Network going forward.

Name change: from AWACAN to AWACAN-ED

Given the added value of looking beyond cancer awareness and the need to bolster efforts to improve pathways to early diagnosis of common cancers in Africa irrespective of gender, we have decided to change of name of the network from African Women Awareness of CANcer (AWACAN) to **African aWAreness of CANcer and Early Diagnosis (AWACAN-ED) Network**. One could liken the '-ED' suffix added to AWACAN as a visually and conceptually apt illustration of the transition from an 'awake' to an 'awakened' state. We hope to implement this awakened state in practice and some of the ways in which we plan to achieve this are described in this newsletter.

A new collaborative grant: Putting research money where our mouth is

To further put the name change in context, we are pleased to inform you that the co-Principal Investigators of the previous AWACAN Project, Professor Jennifer Moodley (University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa) and Professor Fiona Walter (Queen Mary University of London, United Kingdom) have recently been awarded a four-year NIHR Global Health Research Group grant for a multi-country research project titled: **"Advancing Early Diagnosis of Cancer in Southern Africa - the African aWAreness of CANcer and Early Diagnosis (AWACAN-ED) project"** working with Prof Mike Chirenje's team at the University of Zimbabwe.

As the title implies, the new AWACAN-ED Project aims to advance the early diagnosis of cancer in Southern Africa. It builds on the previous African Women Awareness of CANcer (AWACAN) project

that involved developing a valid and reliable tool to measure breast and cervical cancer awareness among women in Sub-Saharan Africa. The AWACAN-ED team includes a multidisciplinary group of researchers from South Africa, Zimbabwe and the United Kingdom (UK) working together with collaborators to advance and improve care-seeking and address barriers to early cancer diagnosis in Southern Africa. The Project focuses on cervical and breast cancer in women and colorectal cancer in both men and women, as these are common cancers in African populations that have relatively easy methods for detection and treatment, especially in the early stages. To advance the early diagnosis of these cancers, the AWACAN-ED Project intends to:

- Assess the time intervals from symptom awareness to referral and diagnosis and factors influencing these intervals in Zimbabwe and South Africa (Workstream 1).
- Develop two e-Tools that promote more timely presentation and referral: a symptom assessment and management e-Tool for primary care providers and a symptom appraisal and help-seeking e-Tool for the public (Workstream 2)
- Evaluate the e-Tools to ensure that they are operationally and economically feasible and equitable, socio-culturally acceptable and support timely referral (Workstream 3).

More information about the study can be found on the Project's [website](#).

Upcoming AWACAN-ED event, training and scholarship opportunities

In addition to its core research objectives, the Project also aims to strengthen research capacity in Southern Africa through training programmes and mentorship of emerging cancer researchers. It will offer scholarships to fund and support Masters and PhD students in both South Africa and Zimbabwe and organise an annual AWACAN-ED Southern African School for Cancer Research.

The first annual AWACAN-ED Southern African School for cancer research

The first AWACAN-ED School will be held in late September 2022. The overarching goal of the School is to facilitate capacity building and foster greater interests in primary care cancer research in Africa. It will bring together cancer care professionals, clinicians, researchers and postgraduate students from across Africa as well as project team members from the UK at an in-person event in Harare, Zimbabwe. Watch the [AWACAN-ED website](#) for further updates on this.

AWACAN-ED student opportunities

The AWACAN-ED Project is currently seeking motivated doctoral and masters' students with interests in public health & primary care oncology to join our interdisciplinary research group. Successful applicants will benefit from their involvement in the Project and are expected to contribute to the design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of the Project findings. Applications are invited for the following PhD and masters' scholarships and bursaries:

South Africa

Full-time funded AWACAN-ED PhD (Public Health) Scholarship at UCT:

Deadline: 29 July 2022, see more details on the programme's [website](#).

Full-time funded AWACAN-ED PhD (Health Economics) Scholarship at UCT:

Deadline: 29 July 2022, see more details on the programme's [website](#).

Full-time funded AWACAN-ED Masters of Public Health (MPH) Scholarship at UCT :

Deadline: 29 July 2022, see more details on the programme's [website](#).

Full-time funded AWACAN-ED Masters of Medicine (MMed) Scholarship at UCT:

Deadline: 29 July 2022, see more details on the programme's [website](#).

Zimbabwe

Full-time funded AWACAN-ED PhD and Masters' Scholarships at the University of Zimbabwe

Deadline: 29 July 2022, see more details on the programme's [website](#).

Call for new members

We sincerely appreciate the amazing work and efforts of our members in promoting cancer awareness and early diagnosis, as well as the various ways members have contributed and supported the AWACAN network. We look forward to an even more productive experience with AWACAN-ED and continue to welcome new members to the Network. To join the Network, sign up [here](#).

Staff updates

There have been some changes to the teams in both Africa and the UK:

- Dr Sarah Day has joined the team at UCT as the Senior Research Officer
 - Drs Bothwell Guzha and Chipso Gwanzura are the lead researchers in Zimbabwe
 - Dr Valerie Sills has joined the UK team as the AWACAN-ED Programme Manager
 - Dr Chukwudi Nnaji is moving on to a new role
- For details of the full project team, see [here](#).

Future newsletters

We will continue to produce regular newsletters to update you on our progress and are developing our AWACAN-ED Communications strategy currently – so watch this space for future updates.