



AWACAN-ED

African aWareness of CANcer
& Early Diagnosis

Sharing the latest news from the AWACAN-ED programme

Hello and welcome to the March 2025 AWACAN-ED Newsletter. Since our last newsletter in July, we have been very busy and we hope you enjoy the updates below on our Research and Capacity development activities.

AWACAN-ED is an NIHR-funded Global Health Research Group that builds on the previous African Women Awareness of CANcer (AWACAN) project. AWACAN-ED started in October 2021 and runs for 4 years. The team includes a multidisciplinary group of researchers from South Africa, Zimbabwe and the United Kingdom working together with collaborators to improve care-seeking and address barriers to early cancer diagnosis in Southern Africa. The programme focuses on cervical and breast cancer in women and colorectal cancer in both men and women. Via our twice yearly newsletters we aim to keep everyone involved and up-to-date with the latest activities and news.



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Research Update

The first two papers from our AWACAN-ED programme have been accepted and will be published soon.

- The first is 'Insights from conducting community- and health facility-based cancer research' and will be published in Social & Health Sciences.
- The second is a systematic review on 'Barriers and facilitators to the implementation of mobile health tools for public use to support symptomatic cancer diagnosis in Sub-Saharan Africa' and will be published in The African Journal of Primary Health Care and Family Medicine.

Work has continued on the analysis of the extensive and rich body of data we collected in the field during Workstream 1. Two papers presenting the findings of the In-Depth interviews have been submitted and are under review. Papers on the Cross-sectional survey and Health Facility Audit are in the final stages of writing and will be submitted soon.

Workstream 2 is also nearing completion. This included the systematic review on the use of mobile health tools for public use, as mentioned above. Following Community workshops in the first half of 2024, a series of images were developed to illustrate the key symptoms of breast, cervical and colorectal cancers and these were tested at a second set of community workshops in late 2024, as shown in the photos below. Feedback on these images has been used to produce an updated version for the Public toolkit and this will be tested in a third round of community workshops this month.



Output from Clinician workshops in the first half of 2024 has been used to inform the development of a Primary care provider toolkit and this is being tested in a second round of clinician workshops.

Workstream 3 involves the evaluation of these Public and Primary care provider toolkits and protocols are being developed and will be submitted for Ethics approval shortly.

2025 will be a big year for AWACAN-ED with many of our initial findings being published and evaluations of our toolkits being carried out. Watch our for updates at upcoming conferences!

Capacity Development Update

Congratulations to Dr Sudarshan Govender, one of our AWACAN-ED scholars at UCT, who completed his Masters in Public Health and graduated in September with Distinction.

Also in September we held the 3rd AWACAN-ED Southern African School for Cancer Research in Cape Town. This was a great success and brought together senior and early career researchers from South Africa, Zimbabwe and the UK with other public health professionals from Ghana, Libya and Kenya. For the first time we had contributions from global health experts from our External Advisory Board (WHO Afro, IARC, NCI) and the Chair of our Steering Group, Professor Richard Sullivan. Also in attendance were our South African experts in community engagement from CANSA and UMTHA who contributed to a teaching session on Community participatory research and engagement.



AWACAN-ED Co-investigator, UCT's Associate Professor Tasleem Ras, presented a real-life case study at the School spotlighting some of the challenges cancer patients face when accessing the public health system in South Africa, and

the enormous strain on healthcare workers on the frontline.

You can read more about this case study [here](#) and read a School report from one of the attendees on our website [here](#).

<https://www.news.uct.ac.za/article/-2024-09-05-the-familiar-story-of-an-african-patient>

<https://awacan.online/news/report-from-the-3rd-awacan-ed-southern-african-school-for-cancer-research/>

Team updates

Since our last newsletter there have been some changes to the team:

- Dr Jone Garcia Lurgain has joined the team at QMUL following completion of her PhD at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.
- Dr Sudarshan Govender has joined the team at UCT following completion of his AWACAN-ED funded Masters studies

Visit our website www.awacan.online and follow us on X (@AWACAN-ED) and Instagram (AWACANED)

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