



Sharing the latest news from the AWACAN-ED programme

Hello and welcome to the October 2025 AWACAN-ED Newsletter. Since our last newsletter in March, we have been very busy and we hope you enjoy the updates below on our 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 until May 2026. 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.



Programme Update

Our programme will continue to run until 31st May 2026. This gives us time to complete our ambitious research plans and deliver maximum impact.

Publications News

We are delighted to report that four papers reporting on findings from our main AWACAN-ED programme have been published since the last newsletter.

Two papers reporting on the In-Depth interviews in Workstream 1 are:

- 'Challenges and facilitators in pathways to cancer diagnosis in Southern Africa: a qualitative study' published in BMJ Open
<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/15/6/e099296>
- 'Health Care Workers' Perspectives on the Barriers and Facilitators to Digital Health Technology Use to Support Symptomatic Cancer Diagnosis

in Southern Africa: Qualitative Study' published in the Journal of Medical Internet Research www.jmir.org/2025/1/e68412

Also, the two papers mentioned in the last newsletter have been published:

- 'Insights from Conducting Community- and Health Facility-Based Cancer Research in Sub-Saharan Africa' published in Social & Health Sciences <https://unisapressjournals.co.za/index.php/SaHS/article/view/16931>
- 'Implementation of mHealth to support cancer diagnosis in Sub-Saharan Africa: A systematic review' published in The African Journal of Primary Health Care and Family Medicine <https://phcfm.org/index.php/phcfm/article/view/4683/7963>

Further papers reporting on key findings of the Workstream 1 cross-sectional survey and health facility audit have been submitted to key Global Health journals.

STOP PRESS: a paper by one of our AWACAN-ED Masters students has just been published: 'Cervical cancer awareness among women recently diagnosed with cervical cancer in South Africa and Zimbabwe' in *ecancermedicalscience* <https://doi.org/10.3332/ecancer.2025.2018>

Research Update

Workstreams 1 and 2 of the AWACAN-ED research programme are now complete and Workstream 3 is well underway evaluating the two toolkits developed in Workstream 2:

- A symptom appraisal and help-seeking toolkit for the public
- A symptom assessment and management toolkit for primary care providers

We are conducting data collection in urban and rural settings in South Africa and Zimbabwe. Recruitment is going well, and the target completion date is Jan 2026.

Analysis of the significant amount of data that will be collected from the two evaluations will commence soon and continue until the end of April 2026.

Additional resource is being brought in both in the UK and Zimbabwe to enable the analysis to be carried out quickly and efficiently.

A number of publications will be written to disseminate the findings and additional dissemination activities will take place via meetings and workshops with stakeholders in both South Africa and Zimbabwe. In addition, conferences will be

attended by team members during the final months of the project and beyond to further disseminate the findings – these will include AORTIC 2025 in Tunisia, CaPRI 2026 in the Netherlands and the World Cancer Congress 2026 in Hong Kong.



At AORTIC 2025, we are delivering a two-hour session on the afternoon of Tuesday 4th November titled: Insights from the African aWAreness of CANcer and Early Diagnosis (AWACAN-ED) programme. This will give an overview of the programme, present the key findings to date and include a panel discussion reflecting on the implications of the findings. We look forward to seeing you there.

Capacity Development Update

Congratulations to Zvikomborero Satuku, one of our Masters Scholars in Zimbabwe, who completed the MSc Global Public Health at QMUL with Merit and to Kelechi Nnene, one of our Masters scholars at UCT, who completed the Masters in Public Health with Distinction. Another of the Zimbabwe Masters students, Tendai Gudza, has also completed & graduated and is awaiting her final grade.

Zviko has written a blog about her research that you can read on our website:

<https://awacan.online/news/factors-associated-with-breast-cancer-stage-at-diagnosis-among-women-enrolled-for-the-awacan-ed-study-in-zimbabwe/>



UCT students Denis Okova (PhD) and Kelechi Nnene (MPH) presented at the African Health Economics Association conference in March 2025 in Kigali, Rwanda. You can read about their experience on our website:

<https://awacan.online/news/report-from-the-7th-african-health-economics-and-policy-association-conference/>

We also have three new AWACAN-ED Masters students – one at UCT and two at UZ – who are making great progress with their research topics.

Visit our website www.awacan.online and follow us on Instagram (AWACANED)

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