

IN THIS ISSUE

Director's message

- September 29 to October 5 is FWHPWI's Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer Week

FWHPWI's Events

- FWHPWI July Meeting/ August fundraising exercises

Research News

- Research for Milk thistle for breast cancer treatment is promising
- Ovarian tumor microenvironment-chip to test novel ways to treat the disease
- Blood test reveals when benign tumors turn cancerous
- Trial shows benefits of targeted drug against early-stage breast cancer with inherited BRCA mutation
- Odor-based test could serve as a non-invasive approach to screen for harder-to-detect cancers
- Medicinal plant stops the growth of breast cancer cells, shows research
- Bitter Melon: A Multifunctional Medicinal Plant with Powerful Bioactive Compounds

Cancer News: Africa

- Genomics could shape cancer research and clinical care in SSA
- Breast cancer in sub-Saharan Africa could relate to breast cancer in African-American women
- A research in South Africa seeks to understand possible solutions to promote adherence to medication and follow-up, needed for breast cancer
- Studies show several conditions (among which certain cultural beliefs and breast cancer treatment-related stigma) hinder health-seeking and early diagnosis in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)
- Potential Treatment of Breast and Lung Cancer Using Dicoma anomala, an African Medicinal Plant

Health and lifestyle

- Hobbies While Battling Cancer Can Boost Mindfulness
- Diet and lifestyle can affect the risk of breast cancer recurrence
- Regularly enjoying berries may help lower your risk of certain cancers, including breast cancer

Director's Message: September 29 to October 5 is FWHPWI's Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer Week

Ovarian cancer is the second most common gynaecological cancer in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).¹ The disease is associated with late presentation as there are no specific early symptoms to warn the patients and caregivers, there are no significant screening tests to predict patients who might develop the cancer and no matter how good the immediate outcomes following the current standard modalities of treatment, recurrence is the rule rather than the exception in most cases. It is the most common cause of death due to a gynaecological malignancy with a 5 year-survival rate of 45%.² It is predicted that by the year 2040, ovarian cancer incidence will rise by 47%, with an even larger increase in the number of deaths each year (up nearly 59% mortality rate).³

Likewise, by 2050, the prevalence of breast cancer is projected to double throughout Africa. Available data on the disease in SSA is scant and, where available, are mostly of epidemiological or clinical nature. Its 5 year-survival rate is less than 40% in SSA, compared to 86% in the United States⁵, with SSA reporting majority of the global growth of breast cancer burden.⁴

Seen the alarming result of research and predictions about these diseases, FWHPWI will observe a week of Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer (HBOC) awareness from 29 September to 05 October.

HBOC is associated with a genetic condition of higher risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and a host of other cancers.

HBOC is common in families who have had multiple cases of breast cancer and/or ovarian cancer on the same side of the family. In families with 4 or more cases of

breast cancer diagnosed before age 60, the chance of HBOC is about 80%.⁶

2 primary genes linked with most families who have HBOC are: BRCA1 and BRCA2. BRCA stands for BReast CAncer. A "mutation," or harmful genetic change, in either BRCA1 or BRCA2 gives a woman an increased lifetime risk of developing breast and ovarian cancers. Men with these gene mutations also have an increased risk of breast cancer and prostate cancer.

Mutations in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes can be identified through a blood or saliva test. The usual method of testing, called standard gene sequencing, can find most BRCA mutations. There are other types of mutations called rearrangements, which include deletions or duplications in BRCA1 and BRCA2 that also may cause an increased risk for these cancers. Testing is also available for large rearrangements in BRCA1 and BRCA2.⁶

Although HBOC is rare, there's value in BRCA genetic testing if you are a healthy person with a strong family history of BRCA-related cancers, or if you have been diagnosed with a cancer associated with BRCA; for the healthy patient with a positive genetic result, there's a lot that can be done with screening and prevention, starting as young as 25 years old.⁷

Join us in sharing cancer information.

Dr. FN. Alaribe Nnadozie
FWHPWI Director

1. Akinfolarin AC. Tropical Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, 2020.

2. Ragupathy K., Lekoudis E., Emovon E., Springer, 2017.

3. WORLD OVARIAN CANCER COALITION ATLAS 2020. 4. Claudia A Anyigba, et.al., Experimental Biology and Medicine 2021.

5. Abeer A. Bahnassy, et.al. Frontiers in Oncology, 2020.

6. American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), cancer.net (Retrieved, 28-09-2021).

7. Yale Medicine, yalemedicine.org/ (Retrieved 28-09-21)

FWHPWI'S EVENTS

Our July activities witnessed the usual outreach/meeting. We discussed *back pain* common among women. We tried to look into the risk factors, and ways one can minimize or reduce back pain. FWHPWI participants shared several personal experiences with a take home that back pain does not designate a particular diseases, but a set of symptoms that can have multiple causes, serious or not, acute or chronic, inflammatory or mechanical – but prevention is better than cure.



In the month of July and August, FWHPWI made fundraising exercises to acquire early detection tools for women cancers. This event was carried out by project group members of Education, Health and wellness.



Left/up, photos of project representatives displaying our Collection Boxes in some of our fundraising venues in Pretoria.

Research News

Research for Milk thistle and extracts of milk thistle for breast cancer treatment is promising



Milk thistle Plant,
Image credit: integrativeasheville.org/

This beautiful flowering may have some health benefits, mainly thanks to the extract silymarin and its active compound silybin, or silibinin. The plant's extracts such as silymarin, are rich in antioxidants and may have some medical uses. Research is exploring silymarin, the milk thistle plant and their potential use as a breast cancer treatment alongside traditional therapies to either protect cells or reduce potential side effects.

[Read more](#)

Researchers develop ovarian tumor microenvironment-chip to test novel ways to treat the disease

Ovarian cancer is a particularly challenging one to monitor. Tumors generally form deep inside a patient's tissue, and it can be difficult to obtain real-time information of the tumor's properties and how it is interacting with blood cells. Also, ovarian tumors can quickly spread inside the body, making time another vital factor in mapping the disease's progression. Researchers are creating a platform technology using the organ-on-a-chip approach where tumor biology can be advanced, and new drugs can be identified by recreating the platelet-tumor and platelet-tumor-drug interactions under the influence of flow, supporting blood vessels and the extracellular matrix.

[Read more](#)

Genetic testing for HBOC

may be appropriate for people who have a personal or family history (in a 1st-, 2nd- or 3rd-degree relative) of certain types of cancer.

Because HBOC is an inherited syndrome, family history of breast, ovarian, and certain other cancers is an important risk factor.

If one parent has a *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* mutation, each of their children will have a 50% chance of inheriting the mutation.

[Read more](#)

Cancer is a leading cause of premature death in every country in the world

But many of these deaths can be prevented



[Click to join us](#)

[share information about the cancers](#)



Just a few ways to reduce your risk of gynaecological cancers advised by National Foundation for Cancer Research

➤ **Have your Pap test by age 21**
The Pap test looks for abnormal cell changes in the cervix to detect cervical cancer in its early stages.

➤ **Protect yourself from Human papilloma virus (HPV)**
Talk to your doctor about getting the HPV test and HPV vaccine. Also, limit your sexual partners and, when you do have sex, use a condom.

➤ **Don't smoke.**
Smoking increases the risk of different cancers including cervical, ovarian, vaginal and vulvar cancers.

➤ **Make healthy choices.**
It's important to maintain a healthy weight, be active and eat a healthy diet consisting of fruit, vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains.

➤ **Share your family history with your doctor.**
Genetic testing is now available to see if you carry a *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* mutation, which could put you in a high-risk category for ovarian and breast cancer. If you carry a genetic mutation associated to Lynch Syndrome, a heredity condition that increases your risk of colon cancer, ovarian cancer, uterine cancer, etc.

➤ **Contact your doctor if you notice any of these symptoms.**

- Abnormal vaginal bleeding or discharge
- Pelvic pain or pressure
- Abdominal or back pain
- Bloating
- Changes in bathroom habits (increased urination, constipation, diarrhea)
- Itching or burning of the vulva
- Changes in vulva color or skin (rash, sores, warts, ulcers).

nfcrr.org/

In a common genetic disorder, blood test reveals when benign tumors turn cancerous

People with an inherited condition known as neurofibromatosis type 1, or NF1, often develop non-cancerous, or benign, tumors that grow along nerves. These tumors can sometimes turn into aggressive cancers, but there hasn't been a good way to determine whether this transformation to cancer has happened. Researchers have developed a blood test that, they believe, could one day offer a highly sensitive and inexpensive approach to detect cancer early in people with NF1. The blood test could also help doctors monitor how well patients are responding to treatment for their cancer.

[Read more](#)

Trial shows benefits of targeted drug against early-stage breast cancer with inherited BRCA mutation

Women with high-risk, early-stage breast cancer who also have inherited faults in their *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* genes have shown a remarkable response to the targeted drug olaparib in a major clinical trial. OlympiA trial showed that adding olaparib for one year following standard treatment for patients who had an inherited BRCA mutation and early-stage, HER-2 negative breast cancer, cut the risk of their breast cancer returning by 42 per cent at a median 2.5-year follow-up.

[Read more](#)

Odor-based test could serve as a non-invasive approach to screen for harder-to-detect cancers

An odor-based test that sniffs out vapors emanating from blood samples was able to distinguish between benign and pancreatic and ovarian cancer cells with up to 95 percent accuracy, according to a new study from researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and Penn's Perelman School of Medicine.

[Read more](#)

Medicinal plant stops the growth of breast cancer cells, shows research



Image credit: indiamart.com

The ground breaking research by the team of Professor Alessandra Devoto at Royal Holloway, University of London, in collaboration with Dr Amanda Harvey at Brunel University London, and Professor Nicholas Smirnoff at University of Exeter, incubated *Arabidopsis thaliana* leaves, treated with the plant hormone Jasmonate (a substance discovered in jasmine that boosts plant responses to stress), with breast cancer cells. They found that although the cancer cells stopped growing, the normal cells remained unaffected.

[Read more](#)

Bitter Melon: A Multifunctional Medicinal Plant with Powerful Bioactive Compounds



Bitter Melon

Image credit: medicalnewsdoday.com

Bitter melon has been associated with anti-cancer, anti-microbial, anti-inflammatory and anti-diabetic properties. The medicinal values of the bitter melon fruit are linked to its high content of phenolics, which act as anti-oxidants. Phenolic compounds containing phenolic acids, coumarins, lignins, tannins, lignanes and flavonoids are among the secondary metabolites that are abundant in the plant.

[Read more](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic is not over.

Never forget this practice!



It is necessary for your health now and always.

Do it often.

The best for you is to keep safe for yourself and for us all.

A scientist at Jackson State University, Mississippi obtained a US patent (6,849,604, issued 1/2/2005) on extracts of

Vernonia amygdalina, an African medicinal plant sometimes called Bitterleaf (or Bitter Leaf).

According to the patent, the extracts are effective against cancer. The inventor obtained samples in Benin City, Nigeria.

[Read More](#)

Genomics could shape cancer research and clinical care in SSA

Developments in genomics in the last decade has improved our understanding of the role of genetics in health and disease. One area where the impact of genomics is very noticeable is in oncology, specifically in terms of diagnosis and elucidating genetic predisposition to rare and common cancers. Researchers sustain that sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) stands to benefit from cancer genomics, given recent spikes in the incidence of various types of cancers in the region.

[Read more](#)

Breast cancer in sub-Saharan Africa could relate to breast cancer in African-American women

African-American women have had a lower incidence, yet higher mortality rate from breast cancer compared with White-American women. African-American women also have had a higher risk for early-onset, high-grade, node-positive, and hormone receptor-negative disease. Similar features have characterized hereditary breast cancer, prompting speculation that risk factors could be genetically transmitted. Further evaluation of this theory required the study of breast cancer among women from sub-Saharan Africa because of their shared ancestry with African-American women.

[Read more](#)

Studies show several conditions (among which certain cultural beliefs and breast cancer treatment related stigma) hinder health-seeking and early diagnosis in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)

In some regions, the disease has been ascribed to supernatural forces, thereby diminishing a sense of personal control over the outcomes. The idea of “beauty” in some cultures involves a “whole” woman; hence, needing a mastectomy may evoke a sense of worthlessness, which impedes

early health-seeking. Ignorance of the disease, unavailability of tests, and inaccessibility of treatment and detection facilities bedevil screening and early detection in SSA.

[Read more](#)

Potential Treatment of Breast and Lung Cancer Using *Dicoma anomala*, an African Medicinal Plant



Image credit: waterberg –bioquest.co.za

Plant-derived anticancer compounds are known to be less toxic to the normal cells and are classified into acetylenic compounds, phenolics, terpenes, and phytosterols. *Dicoma anomala* is a perennial herb belonging to the family Asteraceae and is widely distributed in Sub-Saharan Africa and used in the treatment of cancer, malaria, fever, diabetes, ulcers, cold, and cough. Studies highlight the benefits of *D. anomala* in various therapeutic applications with special reference to the treatment of cancers and the mechanisms through which the plant-derived agents induce cell death.

[Read more](#)



You are invited to our forthcoming meetings and regular outreach programs. Attendance is completely free. You can partake in the discussions, and you can surely come to grab something new for a healthy lifestyle.

Health and Lifestyle

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Hobbies While Battling Cancer Can Boost Mindfulness

Receiving a diagnosis of cancer can be chaotic; it has a huge impact on patients, families, and caregivers, and can be followed by feelings of depression, anxiety, and fear. Research has shown that there are effective methods to quell these emotions, including receiving social support, sharing your feelings with others, and of course, obtaining professional help if you have the symptoms of clinical anxiety or depression. Hobbies, or doing something you instinctively love can also lessen the burden, and the good news is that anything and everything that sets your heart on fire will do – including nature experiences, yoga, art, or even sewing.

[Read more](#)

maintaining a healthy weight and limiting alcohol (if consumed at all).

[Read more](#)

Regularly enjoying berries may help lower your risk of certain cancers, including breast cancer



Blueberries

Image credit: tasteofhome.com

Diet and lifestyle can affect the risk of breast cancer recurrence

World Cancer Research Fund recommends that women who have had breast cancer follow advice to reduce their risk of cancer coming back. This includes eating a healthy diet that is high in fibre and low in saturated fats, being physically active,

Berries' antioxidants, including flavonoids and anthocyanins, have been shown to protect against cellular damage, as well as the development and spread of cancer cells. Notably, a study in 75,929 women linked higher berry intake – and blueberries in particular – to a lower risk of estrogen receptor negative (ER-) breast cancer.

[Read more](#)

FWHPWI Current Project Groups

Research group

Education, Health and
Wellness group

Editorial group

Support group

Cancer survivors group



Vegan Berry Fruit Salad

This Mixed Berry Fruit Salad is a delightful accompaniment to any meal, no matter what it is, or no matter the time of day. Your friends and family will be raving over the sweet mixture of fresh blueberries, plump juicy strawberries, and the sweet black and red raspberries. You will find that it is incredibly easy to prep all of the fresh berries and toss them into a bowl.

Source: healthyfitnessmeals.com

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