



AECA

American Eurasian
Cancer Alliance

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2019



STRATEGIC COLLABORATIONS IN CANCER CONTROL

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Readers,

Despite over twenty years of experience coordinating intellectual and scientific resources to further research and discovery in cancer prevention, treatment strategies, and palliative care, the first half of this year may have been one of the most influential I've seen in terms of the level of international cooperation and impact to both scientific and patient communities. I'm excited to share with you just a few highlights from our recent global cancer research and control efforts.

One initiative that I was honored to be involved with was the inauguration of the Federal Palliative Care Center in Moscow, Russia. Worldwide, only around 14% of people who need palliative care currently receive it. The Russian Federation-based Center will serve as the regional hub for palliative care research, training, and education, eventually expanding this much needed resource to millions of patients throughout the Eurasian region. The Center will also serve as a research and training partner for the global palliative care community. Due in large part to the cooperation of leading international palliative care experts, the launch was extremely successful, and this new resource has become an internationally-recognized facility.

Another American Eurasian Cancer Alliance (AECA) priority that we've seen tremendous development in international cooperation has been gynecological cancer. By developing strategic alliances to sustain scientific programs, we've been able to support global women's health specialists and the research and discoveries on which they shed light.

Much of the action has focused on human papillomavirus (HPV)-associated cancers, including cervical and oropharyngeal. Each year, over 600,000 new HPV-associated cancer cases are diagnosed. AECA aligns with the World Health Organization (WHO) in their effort to recognize cervical cancer and other HPV-related diseases as a global public health threat and to incorporate HPV vaccines in national immunization programs. More than ever before, we've seen the impetus from Russian and other Eurasian public health officials to combat this growing concern.

To unite Eurasian gynecologists and to draw international attention to this pressing issue, AECA will be facilitating a high-level congress to be held in Russia next year that will address not just HPV-associated diseases, but pathways for prevention, screening, and treatment for all gynecologic cancers.

Through our long history convening cancer control stakeholders, AECA has worked with countless academic, governmental, and non-profit organizations from around the globe. Several that have proven instrumental over the last few months include the U.S. National Cancer Institute (NCI), the International Gynecologic Cancer Society (IGCS), and the Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance (WHPCA), as well as representatives from world-renowned cancer centers including Fox Chase, Johns Hopkins, MD Anderson, and many others.

We couldn't do everything we do without support from so many of you. Thank you for being such an important part of our global research and cancer control community!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sophia Michaelson'.

Sophia Michaelson

EXPANDING GYNECOLOGICAL CARE THROUGHOUT EURASIA



International experts in HPV vaccination and pathology met to discuss challenges and opportunities related to HPV-associated cancers

For several years, AECA has advised IGCS on engagement strategies within the Eurasian gynecological cancer community. At the International Conference of HPV-Associated Cancers held in Moscow, Russia this past summer, cancer control experts discussed primary prevention and screening techniques to lower the burden of HPV-associated cancers. AECA coordinated participation of global experts and supported IGCS in efforts to reaffirm agreements with Eurasian partners. Discussions around the HPV vaccine included perspectives from leading health organizations, including the WHO and the International Agency for Research on Cancer, further validating use of the vaccination among new populations.



Established regional IGCS members in Central Asia and Eastern Europe laid the groundwork to engage the largest Eurasian nation – Russia. AECA supported IGCS as they secured Russian representation to join the international fight against gynecologic cancers. AECA, IGCS, and the Russian Society of Oncologists in Cancer of Reproductive Systems are partnering to expand regional gynecological programs and to host a related international congress to be held in Russia in October 2020. Gynecological experts from throughout Eurasia will unite with international counterparts to ensure women around the world are receiving the most innovative screening and treatment techniques for gynecological cancers.

U.S. scientific investigators recognize tremendous potential in Russia to expand research collaborations and increase patient enrollment in clinical trials. Cervical cancer vaccination campaigns are not yet thoroughly integrated within the population, and this may serve as an opportunity to study both etiology and disease prevention strategies. Research protocol for a current U.S.-based clinical trial focused on minimally invasive ovarian cancer surgery has already been shared with Russian institutions. This collaboration may impact the standard of care for patients around the world.

“Due in part to the strong relationships AECA has formed with both U.S. and Eurasian researchers, we were able to connect with Dr. Alexey Shevchuk, a gynecologic oncologist based in Moscow, Russia. We recently welcomed Dr. Shevchuk to the Editorial Board of the International Journal of Gynecological Cancer, adding an essential international perspective to the multidisciplinary research we disseminate amongst gynecologists, oncologists, radiologists, and pathologists, as well as other healthcare professionals around the globe.”

- Dr. Pedro Ramirez, Editor in Chief of the International Journal of Gynecological Cancer, Director of Minimally Invasive Surgical Research and Education and Professor at the MD Anderson Cancer Center



Dr. Pedro Ramirez welcomes Dr. Alexey Shevchuk to IJGC

PROMOTING INCREASED ACCESS TO PALLIATIVE CARE

For years, AECA has collaborated with political leaders and healthcare practitioners in Russia as interest in national palliative care programs has increased. This year, AECA partnered with representatives from Johns Hopkins, Harvard Medical School, the Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance, and the PACED Foundation in a monumental effort to support the launch of the Federal Palliative Care Center at Sechenov University in Moscow, Russia. Through this coalition, international experts in palliative care aim to provide technical and advisory support to increase both organizational capacity and international cooperation. Alongside the event, AECA and Russian hospice care professionals coordinated a clinical conference focused on new technologies and best practices in palliative care. Outcomes of the event were disseminated with regional palliative care specialists to increase the scope of knowledge-sharing and to encourage opportunities for scientific research collaboration.

“The Moscow hospice and palliative care landscape has improved remarkably in the past decade as a direct result of the AECA, WHO, and other regional organizations’ coordinated efforts to improve end-of-life care. There are many untapped basic research and clinical trial collaborative opportunities between U.S. cancer centers and Eurasian hospice and palliative care centers. Research conducted in this region has the potential to inform palliative care practice for many other low-resource global communities.”

- **Dr. Tom Smith**, Director of Palliative Medicine and Professor of Oncology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

A strengthened network between U.S and Russian research institutions has the potential to benefit both countries, noted Smith. Proposed projects include randomized trials of medications to treat both pain and related ailments, as well as pilot trials of novel non-invasive techniques to relieve pain.

BRIEFING STAKEHOLDERS AT THE EURASIAN CANCER CENTERS TASKFORCE SUMMIT

In June 2019, AECA updated leaders of Eurasian cancer centers on the implementation of current regional programs focused on several cancer disease sites, standardized pathology reporting, and palliative care. Summit participants included cancer control leaders from the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Moldova. The event was coordinated by the Association for Directors of Institutes of Oncology and Radiology, CIS & Eurasia (ADIOR). It provided an opportunity to align AECA with cancer center stakeholders on collaborative research efforts across the Eurasian region.



Eurasian cancer centers representatives meet in Moscow, Russia



Presenting on AECA's palliative care experience



Global palliative care experts meet to discuss clinical topics



Dr. Tom Smith conducts patient rounds in the Federal Palliative Care Center

CONNECTING HEAD AND NECK CANCER EXPERTS



Dr. John Ridge of Fox Chase Cancer Center

Earlier this year, AECA initiated a new effort in professional training, focused specifically on head and neck cancers. Jointly with the Eurasian Society of Head and Neck Oncology, AECA facilitated the participation of Dr. John Ridge of Fox Chase Cancer Center at the VI Eurasian Head and Neck Cancer Forum to encourage international collaboration on the topic. In order to further understand the head and neck cancer control landscape in Eurasia, Dr. Ridge presented and facilitated discussions on oral, thyroid, and oropharynx cancers. Conversations regarding both multidisciplinary and international cooperation in basic and clinical research will serve as a foundation for collaboration amongst global experts.

KNOWLEDGE-SHARING WITHIN THE PATHOLOGY PROGRAM

Since 2014, AECA initiated the pathology development program with Eurasian participants. Regional facilities with cancer registries have since hosted several pathology courses, with a focus on several cancer sites, including urological, gynecological, colorectal, and lung.

AECA successfully facilitated a knowledge-exchange opportunity in Russia following the HPV Congress in Moscow. On behalf of AECA and IGCS, Dr. Anna Plotkin of the University of Toronto led a standardized reporting masterclass at the Blokhin Cancer Research Center. The topic was a critical resource to enhance medical facilities' capacity to conduct and disseminate high-quality research in diagnostic pathology. As part of AECA's continuous effort in this arena, the session laid the groundwork for future cooperation amongst regional and international pathology experts. AECA will continue to further develop the pathology program in Eurasia by increasing the programmatic scope and networks of participating pathologists.



Dr. Anna Plotkin and her research team

SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE IN SCREENING PRACTICES



Kazakhstan cancer screening presentation at ICSN

As a direct byproduct of initial AECA engagement at the 2018 Eurasian Cancer Screening Congress, researchers from Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Lithuania presented their scientific abstracts at the 2019 International Cancer Screening Network Conference in Rotterdam, Netherlands. Through encouragement of regional partners, AECA was able to expand the reach of the international cancer screening conference to additional low- and middle-income regions. With supplementary data from low-resource communities, international researchers have a more comprehensive view of global cancer control efforts and may benefit from lessons learned by bringing research insights to their rural or low-resource communities. Raikhan Bolatbekova of Kazakhstan shared invaluable insights into cervical cancer screening programs and was sponsored by the NCI to attend.

FOSTERING FOREIGN RELATIONS BETWEEN U.S.–RUSSIAN CANCER ADVOCATES

A delegation consisting of representatives from IARC, NCI, AECA, IGCS, MD Anderson, and Johns Hopkins were invited to the residence of U.S. Ambassador to Russia, Jon Huntsman Jr., to discuss the current state of collaborative research projects between U.S. and Russian cancer control experts. The Ambassador supports the strong relationship and expressed his aspiration to continue these valuable international scientific opportunities.

OUR MISSION



To pool the intellectual and scientific resources of member institutions to further research and discovery in cancer prevention, treatment strategies, and palliative care.

Since 2001, AECA has provided turnkey solutions for international organizations seeking to conduct research or develop collaborations with stakeholders throughout Eurasia. Major areas of emphasis within AECA's portfolio include efforts to strengthen global cancer research, promote research training and education, and translate research into policy and programs.

STRENGTHENING GLOBAL CANCER RESEARCH

AECA is a scientific facilitator in Eurasia, adept at securing resources to strengthen cancer research through engagement with Ministries of Health, leaders of research institutes, and other regional decision makers. AECA programs focus on enhancing the understanding of the biology and etiology of cancer, implementing effective strategies for prevention, and developing new approaches for detection and treatment.

PROMOTING RESEARCH TRAINING AND EDUCATION

AECA has effectively facilitated research training delivered through high-quality, multidisciplinary professional courses designed to enhance knowledge and skills. Primary areas of international education exchange include urologic and gynecologic oncology, hematology, radiation oncology, pathology, immunotherapy, cancer prevention, palliative care, and pediatric cancers.

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO POLICY AND PROGRAMS

AECA, together with international partners, leads cancer control activities in Eurasia by providing guidance on existing practices to inform policy and strengthen research capacity, stimulate partnerships, and contribute to successful implementation of cancer control plans. AECA's active engagement in Eurasia has and continues to ensure that research results are translated into policies and programs that help all people live longer and healthier lives.

FALL 2019
**COLLABORATING
ORGANIZATIONS**

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Cancer Centers and Universities

Johns Hopkins University, Maryland, USA
Fox Chase Cancer Center, Pennsylvania, USA
MD Anderson Cancer Center, Texas, USA
Harvard University, Massachusetts, USA
University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada
Blokhin Cancer Research Center, Moscow, Russia
Sechenov University, Moscow, Russia
Hertsen Cancer Research Center, Moscow, Russia

Societies

International Gynecologic Cancer Society (IGCS)
Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance (WHPCA)
PACED Foundation
International Cancer Screening Network (ICSN)
Russian Cancer Society
Russian Society of Oncologists in Cancer of Reproductive Systems
Hospice Care Professionals Association, Russia
Association for Directors of Institutes of Oncology and Radiology, CIS & Eurasia (ADIOR)