HEAD AND NECK CANCER INTERNATIONAL GROUP NEWSLETTER

HNCIG
HEAD & NECK CANCER INTERNATIONAL GROUP

THIS ISSUE

Advert for Chair of Communication Group

Ongoing and Upcoming Studies

Introduction of Member Organizations

Programme for 2025 Annual Meeting in Portugal

HNCIG Website:
https://www.hncig.org/

Follow the HNCIG twitter feed:
@H N C I G

HNCIG newsletter editors:
Dr. Kenya Kobayashi
Dr. Christina Henson
Dr. Alex Ruehle
Dr. Arjun Singh
Dr. Sreeram M.P.

HNCIG NEWS

Advert for Chair of Communication Group

READ MORE PAGE 2

Three Ongoing HNCIG Projects

READ MORE PAGE 3, 4

Introduction of Member Organizations India's Research Ecosystem

READ MORE PAGE 5, 6

SAVE THE DATE

HNCIG 2025 Annual Meeting, Faro, Portugal Nov. 12-13

SEE PAGE 7, 8 FOR PROGRAMME

Communications Group

Advert for Co-Chair, Deputy Chair and Members of Communications Group

The Communications Group of the Head and Neck Cancer International Group (HNCIG) is seeking members to participate and support the Group.

The HNCIG is the umbrella organization for the world's leading national clinical trials groups in head and neck cancer. As such, HNCIG is the leading global platform for collaborative research in head and neck cancer and is a dynamic and rapidly moving organization with wide impact and reach.

HNCIG is establishing a Communications Group, which consolidates the existing Newsletter, Website, and Social Media groups, with the mandate to develop, coordinate, and manage all internal and external communications for HNCIG. The overarching aim is to enhance the visibility, credibility, and influence of HNCIG among researchers, clinicians, industry partners, patient communities, and the general public.

If you are passionate about advancing communication strategies within the global cancer research network of HNCIG, we encourage you to apply.

How to Apply
To apply, please send an email to the HNCIG Young Investigators Committee chair at secretariat@hncig.org with the following documents:

- Cover Letter: Describe your motivation for joining the Communications Group, the skills you bring, and any ideas you would like to contribute.
- Specify the position you are applying for Chair, deputy chair or membership of the Group.
- Curriculum Vitae: A short CV (1–2 pages) outlining relevant experience and qualifications.
- Application deadline: 31th October

Brief Snapshot of Three Ongoing HNCIG Projects

The HNCIG is actively conducting international studies, pattern-of-care analyses, and Delphi consensus efforts, all aimed at standardizing treatment approaches and improving outcomes for head and neck cancer patients worldwide. We would like to briefly highlight three ongoing scientific projects of the HNCIG.

1. Extranodal Extension Project

Contributed by Christina Henson

The HNCIG recently published results of a real-world study assessing accuracy and prognosis of extranodal extension diagnosed on radiologic imaging (iENE) in HPV-mediated oropharyngeal cancer in the Red Journal. This retrospective cohort study compiled patient data from 13 international sites and showed that in current real-world practice, iENE shows wide variability and is not independently prognostic of outcomes, but that accuracy and prognostic power of iENE are significantly increased when CT and MRI studies are both performed and are interpreted by experienced head and neck radiologists utilising more inclusive diagnostic criteria. These results emphasize the urgent need for validated consensus diagnostic criteria and protocols to enhance the clinical utility of iENE.

Read the full article here:
https://www.redjournal.org/action/showPdf?pii=S0360-3016%2825%2900370-0
Link to our previously published ENE consensus recommendations here:
https://www.thelancet.com/series-do/head-and-neck-cancer-consensus-recommendations

2. Head and Neck Cancer Survivorship Care Assessment and Protocols Project (HNCS-CAP)

Contributed by Zsuzsanna Iyizoba-Ebozue

Despite increasing awareness of the long-term challenges faced by head and neck cancer (HNC) survivors, current care approaches vary widely across countries, institutions, and guidelines. Therefore, the HNCIG YCI Survivorship Working Group has launched the HNCS-CAP (Head and Neck Cancer Survivorship Care Assessment and Protocols) project led by Dr Zsuzsanna Iyizoba-Ebozue, Dr Anna Lee and Dr Laurelie Wishart .HNCS-CAP involves three distinct work packages: a comprehensive analysis of clinical guidelines, an institutional practice mixed method study (international survey and interviews to gain clinician insights) and a Delphi consensus process. Patient feedback is embedded throughout the process.

By mapping these diverse inputs, the project will bridge the gap between current guidelines and real-world practice. Ultimately supporting international harmonisation of care, and the development of international expert consensus statements to improve outcomes for HNC survivors globally.

3. Response Evaluation as a Surrogate Prognostic Outcome in Neoadjuvant-Treated Heas and Neck Cancer (RESPONd-HNC)

Contributed by Myrto Moutafi

The RESPONd-HNC project is a HNCIG initiative evaluating whether radiological and pathological responses to induction or neoadjuvant therapy (NAT) can serve as surrogate markers for long-term survival outcomes in patients with locoregionally advanced head and neck squamous cell carcinoma (HNSCC). The study includes patients treated with NAT followed by surgery, radiotherapy (RT), or chemoradiotherapy (CRT). It aims to assess whether complete or partial responses—both radiologic (rCR/rPR) and pathologic (pCR/MPR)—are predictive of overall survival (OS) and progression-free survival (PFS). Initial efforts involve a systematic review and meta-analysis of published data, with a potential transition to an individual patient data meta-analysis. The ultimate goal is to support the use of NAT response as a surrogate endpoint in clinical trials, expediting drug development and treatment individualization. The project will also explore differential effects by HPV status and treatment subgroups to identify predictors of favorable outcomes.

These projects collectively demonstrate the HNCIG's international efforts across various areas, all with the goal of improving head and neck cancer treatment worldwide.

Introduction of Member Organizations by Young Investigators

India's Head and Neck Cancer Research Ecosystem: Institutions, Collaborations, and Funding Pathways

Contributed by Arjun Singh and Sreeram M.P.

India bears one of the highest global burdens of head and neck cancers (HNC), which constitute nearly one-third of all cancer cases in the country. This is largely due to widespread consumption of smokeless tobacco and areca nut, combined with limited access to early diagnosis and treatment. In response, India has developed a comprehensive and rapidly evolving research ecosystem focused on HNC, encompassing prevention, early detection, treatment, and survivorship.

Central to this ecosystem are leading cancer institutions and academic centers such as the Tata Memorial Centre (TMC) and its research wing ACTREC, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi, the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) in Chandigarh, the Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology in Bengaluru, and the Cancer Institute (WIA) in Chennai. These centers serve as hubs for clinical research, epidemiological studies, surgical innovation, and translational science in HNC. Their work is often in collaboration with other institutions and organizations, contributing to a broad, integrated approach to cancer research.

Collaborative networks play a key role in strengthening India's HNC research efforts. The National Cancer Grid (NCG), spearheaded by TMC, connects over 300 cancer centers across the country, facilitating the development of shared clinical protocols, multicenter trials, and training programs. Meanwhile, the Head and Neck Cancer Oncology Group (HNCOG) is a specialized collaborative that designs and implements prospective clinical trials tailored specifically to the Indian context. These initiatives ensure that research is not only high quality but also relevant to local needs and healthcare delivery systems. Professional associations such as the Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons of India (AOMSI) and the Foundation for Head and Neck Oncology (FHNO) contribute further by promoting academic discourse, establishing clinical guidelines, and facilitating research through conferences and workshops.

A notable feature of India's HNC research ecosystem is its diversified funding landscape. Research in this space is supported through a combination of government grants, institutional budgets, philanthropic contributions, international collaborations, and increasingly, corporate social responsibility (CSR) funding. Government agencies such as the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), the Department of Science and Technology (DST), and state governments provide competitive and infrastructure grants to drive innovation and address public health gaps. At the same time, institutions are increasingly partnering with corporate donors under India's 2% CSR mandate to support community-based research, digital health interventions, early detection programs, and implementation science.

Philanthropy is also vital, particularly for pilot studies, capacity-building, data systems, and research fellowships. To tap into this potential, several institutions have established dedicated fundraising and grants management offices that build lasting relationships with donors and foundations.

India's translational research in HNC is progressing steadily, powered by collaborations between cancer centers and top science and technology institutes like the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs). These partnerships are advancing the development of AI-driven diagnostic tools, ctDNA-based liquid biopsy technologies, and portable Narrow Band Imaging (NBI) devices to enhance cancer screening in rural areas. Much of this research is funded by ICMR and other national agencies, with an emphasis on making advanced, affordable, and accessible cancer care available to underserved populations.

With a strong base of scientific talent, collaborative networks, and a growing funding ecosystem, India's head and neck cancer research efforts are well-positioned to contribute significantly to global oncology, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

HNCIG Annual Meeting 2025

HNCIG 2025 Annual Meeting - November 12-13, Faro, Portugal

W 12 November 2025:

0900 – 0930: Registration

0930 – 1015: General Assembly [Closed Session – HNCIG Membership Only]
-Welcome to Faro
-Chair's Update
-Updates from Committee Chairs

1015 – 1115: Recently Completed HNCIG Projects
-Extranodal Extension Project | Christina Henson
-Oligometastasis Survery and Delphi Consensus | Petr Szturz

1115 – 1200: Audience with Industry: Industry Pipelines, Coming Trials, and Q&A

1200 – 1300: Lunch

1300 – 1345: Audience with Industry: Industry Pipelines, Coming Trials, and Q&A

1345 – 1430: Update on Ongoing Projects and Proposals
-Post-Operative Radiotherapy in High-risk, Early-stage, Oral Cavity Cancer (PORTHES-OC) | Christina Henson
-Surrogate Markers for Predicting Response to Neoadjuvant Therapy | Myrto Moutafi

1430 – 1500: Spotlight on Member Organization – Japan Clinical Oncology Group (JCOG)
-Achievements and Ongoing Trials in JCOG-HNCSG | Naomi Kiyota
-Innovative JCOG Trials in Head and Neck Oncology | Yuki Saito

1500 – 1530: Coffee

1530 – 1700: New Project Proposals
-Readiness of Cooperative Groups to Implement AI in Clinical Trials | Sujith Baliga
-NeCTAR: Neoadjuvant Chemotherapy and Immunotherapy (NACI) before Transoral Surgery and Adjuvant Radiotherapy and Chemotherapy (NeCTAR) | Hisham Mehanna & Christian Simon

1700 – 1830: Poster Presentations Train, Drinks, and Networking

HNCIG Annual Meeting 2025

HNCIG 2025 Annual Meeting - November 12-13, Faro, Portugal

Th 13 November 2025:

930 – 1200: Creating the International Clinical Trials of the Next Decade

930 – 945: Results of International Prioritization Process
Pankaj Kumar Panda, National Cancer Center Singapore, Singapore

945 – 1015: Experience from European Network of Gynecological Oncology Trials (ENGOT) in Establishing a Successful International Clinical Trials Platform

1015 – 1030: Coffee Break

1030 – 1200: Brainstorming Sessions: Head and Neck Cancer Clinical Trials of the 2030s

1230: Registration Open for 10th Trends in Head and Neck Oncology (THNO) Meeting

