



BCNetter

Issue No. 6, May 2018

A word from the BCNet Coordinator...

It is over 6 months since I retired from my position as Head of [IARC's Laboratory Services and Biobank Group](#). In January 2018, I returned to IARC as a Senior Visiting Scientist with the Education and Training Group, continuing the role of coordinator of the [BCNet](#) and based for part of the time at the Medical Research Council ([MRC](#)) Unit at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine ([LSHTM](#)), in The Gambia.

In this edition of the BCNetter, I would like to take the opportunity to provide a brief summary of the various initiatives that I have been involved in, representing the network.

In November 2017, the [University of Indonesia](#) and [Indonesian Medical Education Research Institute Faculty of Medicine](#), in collaboration with BCNet member Dr Jajah Fachiroh and colleagues ([Universitas Gadjah Mada](#), Yogyakarta), organised the 3rd National Biobank Workshop in Jakarta. The workshop was attended by researchers, clinicians, oncologists, ethics committee members and policy makers who shared their experiences and knowledge and provided updates on Biobanking and related activities in their respective institutions.

The forum also provided the opportunity for the review of the white paper on Biobanking being developed for submission to the relevant Government Ministries. Whilst in Indonesia, I visited the Biobank at the Universitas Gadjah Mada (Yogyakarta). It is a pleasure to note the rapid development taking place in the Biobank by Dr Fachiroh and her team with great support from the University.



Dr Jajah Fachiroh (second from the right) and her team.



Participants at the 3rd national Biobank Workshop in Jakarta, November 2017

A joint event with [B3Africa](#) was hosted at [IARC](#) in November 2017: the 3rd B3Africa training and the 1st BCNet Symposium. Overall, 58 participants, including 26 from Europe and 30 from Africa participated in the event, with BCNet members from Egypt, Cote D'Ivoire, South Africa, Indonesia, Ghana, Poland, Nigeria and Sénégal presenting biobank-based projects showcasing how biobanks are contributing to research and the value of multidisciplinary collaborations. The symposium is covered in more detail in this edition of the newsletter.



Members of the Technical Committee, who met in Abidjan on 6-8 March 2018 as part of the project for the Regional Biobank which will be based at Institut Pasteur Côte d'Ivoire.

Preparation is ongoing for the West Africa Health Organisation's ([WAHO](#)) coordinated [Regional Biobank](#) to be based at a BCNet member's institution - the [Institut Pasteur, Cote d'Ivoire](#). The centralized facility will provide a platform for biological samples and data from 15 African countries to strengthen regional capacity for the conservation of biological resources and improve scientific collaboration between reference laboratories and support biomedical research on infectious diseases. On March 6-8, 2018, the 2nd Technical Committee Meeting was held in Abidjan to validate the draft regulations and

finalise the Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures for adoption by the Regional Body.

Maimuna, Banjul, May 2018



Publications:

The manuscript entitled *Barriers and Opportunities in Consent and Access Procedures in Low- and Middle-Income Country Biobanks: Meeting Notes from the BCNet Training and General Assembly* has been published in [Biopreservation and Biobanking](#). You can find a copy [here](#).

The manuscript entitled: *Quality Control of Serum and Plasma by Quantification of (4E,14Z)-Sphingadienine-C18-1-Phosphate Uncovers Common Preanalytical Errors During Handling of Whole Blood* has been published in [Clinical Chemistry](#). You can find a copy [here](#).

The manuscript entitled: *Biospecimens and Biobanking in Global Health* has been published in [Clinics in Laboratory Medicine](#). You can find a copy [here](#).

The IARC-BCNet Symposium: *From Biobank Infrastructure to Research: How BCNet Member Biobanks and Cohorts Are Contributing to Address Public Health Concerns*, was held at IARC in

Lyon from 27 November to 1 December 2017. The Symposium was held in conjunction with the B3Africa Training Workshop.



On 27-28 November, the BCNet organized a symposium “From Biobank Infrastructure to Research: How BCNet Member Biobanks are Contributing to Address Public Health Concerns” in Lyon, France. The symposium aimed to showcase the efforts of its members and institutions in developing biobank-based collaborative research projects to address

public health issues.

Presentations for the BCNet symposium were selected following an abstract submission process. The abstract had to present a biobank-based study, including background, objective, methodology (including for sample/data management), results if available, as well as a conclusion which discussed how the eB3Kit could contribute to sustain, upscale or improve their study. Eleven abstracts (out of 18 received) were considered relevant to the symposium's thematic and format, and therefore accepted. In addition to BCNet members, "state-of-the-art" speakers were invited to present.

The symposium was held in collaboration with the second face-to-face training of the B3Africa project, which took place just after the BCNet symposium, from 28 November to 1 December 2017. All participants in the symposium were also invited to attend the B3Africa training, which offered a hands-on experience of selected tools from the eB3Kit.

The co-organisation of the BCNet Symposium and B3Africa training provided the opportunity to reach out to a wider range of LMIC institutions that would adopt and implement the eB3Kit. BCNet members benefited from a unique opportunity to learn about the B3Africa informatics platform and tools during the face-to-face training.

The final program consisted of:

- BCNet symposium: 27-28 November (1.5 day)
- B3Africa training – general presentations: 28 November afternoon (0.5 day);
- B3Africa training – parallel sessions (IT and users) for hands-on training: 29 November – 1 December morning (3 days).

Click [here](#) for information on the European General Data Protection Regulations.



Visit to IARC by Dr Tom Kariuki

On 12 February 2018, IARC hosted the visit of [Dr Thomas Maina Kariuki](#) (left), Director of the [Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa \(AESA\)](#).

AESA is one of the flagship programmes of the [African Academy of Sciences](#), a pan African organisation headquartered in Kenya, which aims to drive sustainable development in Africa through science technology and innovation. AESA's mission is to catalyse investments, strategies and programmes that promote the brightest minds in Africa, foster scientific excellence, inspire research leadership and accelerate innovation in ways that will improve lives and shift the centre of gravity for African science to Africa. Initiated by the AAS and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Agency, AESA is an agenda setting and funding platform established to address Africa's health and development challenges.

Dr Kariuki gave an inspiring seminar to IARC staff on "The Future of Science in Africa", which may be consulted [here](#).

Discussions also took place with BCNet Coordinator, Dr Maimuna Mendy, about opportunities for leveraging biobank-based research in Africa.



The BCNet Catalogue – A Pathway for Research Collaboration

Communication - Evolution - Participation

The BCNet catalogue is a web application, accessible via the Internet, which offers visibility to BCNet member biobanks, their services and their samples.

Two presentations have been given during recent international events:

- As the BCNet community grows, with 34 members to date, the capacity of the catalogue has to keep up with the specificities of the member biobanks in terms of data quality and IT resources.
- IARC BCNet team members participated in MIABIS working groups for the evolution of the MIABIS standard. The adjustment of the data model of the BCNet catalogue has started accordingly.

We are also testing:

- Enhancement of data collecting and editing functionalities for data providers;
- Improvement of application design with an integration between the BCNet website and the BCNet catalogue web application.

In addition, data collection is ongoing with two main criteria:

- Data quality: ongoing update of the catalogue data with registered biobanks
- Data extension: plan to register BCNet members' biobanks not already in the catalogue during the 2nd quarter of 2018.

BCNet members are welcome to contact the IARC BCNet team at bcnet@iarc.fr for information, assistance in registration and participation in the BCNet catalogue.

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What's On

[Europe Biobank Week](#): **September 4-7, 2018 / Antwerp, Belgium. Click [here](#) for information on travel fellowships**

[4th African Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases and Biosecurity](#): **26-28 September / Freetown, Sierra-Leone**

[Global Health Forum](#): **November 13-14 / Cape Town, South Africa**



The International Society for Biological and Environmental Repositories (ISBER) is pleased to announce the release of the ISBER Best Practices, Fourth Edition.

The ISBER Best Practices can be downloaded [here](#).

The ISBER Best Practices: Recommendations for Repositories Fourth Edition presents the most effective practices for the management of biological and environmental specimen collections and repositories. These are either evidence-based or consensus-based practices for collection, long-term storage, retrieval and distribution of specimens. They promote the availability of high-quality biological and environmental specimens for future research.

Biorepository managers, technicians and researchers can take advantage of the ISBER Best Practices to improve specimen collection, storage, use and governance based on evidence-based practices established by the global repository community. The Best Practices will lead towards increased specimen quality *from collection to discovery*.

Questions about the ISBER Best Practices can be directed to bestpractices@isber.org



IARC's Technical Publication No 44, Common Minimum Technical Standards and Protocols for Biobanks Dedicated to Cancer Research, includes guidelines and recommendations for biobanks not only in high-income countries but also in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The recommendations are based on validated and/or evidence-based guidelines.

The book also includes sections on sample sharing, ethical, legal, and social issues (ELSI), and harmonization guidelines important to support collaborative research efforts that make use of biological materials. In particular, the section on open access deals with the principles of sharing and provides recommendations for biobanks in relation to sample and data sharing, which is key to establishing research collaboration. The section on governance provides guidelines on governance structures and standard templates for biobanks for a transparent and effective running of the facilities.

This book also benefits from the experience and knowledge gained by IARC from coordinating the LMICs Biobank and Cohort Building Network (BCNet) and managing an international biobank, which contains diverse collections of specimens and data drawn from studies across the world, including the EPIC (European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition) collection.

You can download a copy of the publication [here](#)



LMIC



BCNET
BIOBANK AND COHORT BUILDING NETWORK

Our email address is:
bcnet@iarc.fr