

# BCNetter

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Dear BCNet Members,

In the last few months, several publications on health systems resilience have come out on account of work during the COVID pandemic. What is increasingly clear, is that Low- and Middle-Income country (LMIC)-specific networks play a critical role in strengthening global systems and ensuring that global health research is inclusive, equitable, and locally relevant. Such networks create platforms for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and capacity building among institutions that often face shared challenges, including limited infrastructure, funding constraints, and shortages of specialized expertise.

The same can be said for biobanking, as a key and still growing component of the global health research ecosystem. Networks such as BCNet, REBLAC, the Arab Biobank Network and MBI-RSA, also enhance the quality, interoperability, and visibility of biospecimen collections. Through shared protocols and training programs, they promote good governance, ethical practices, and high-quality data management, which are essential for meaningful research partnerships. This strengthens trust among researchers, participants, and communities, supporting long-term sustainability and regional system resilience.

Importantly, LMIC-specific networks function complementary to associations (ISBER, ESBB) and empower local scientists and institutions to lead research agendas rather than remain peripheral contributors. They facilitate equitable participation in international studies and improve access to global funding and innovation ecosystems. Finally, they act catalytically for fostering South-South collaboration and strengthening negotiating power in North-South partnerships, these networks help rebalance global research dynamics.

In the previous BCNetters we have presented such networks and ongoing efforts that have a strong national footprint, such as in Vietnam, Indonesia,

Malaysia, South Africa and the Philippines. Additionally, we have highlighted more regional initiatives, such as the Arab Biobank Network. These all serve as living examples on the impact of biobanking in national and regional research. In this issue we turn our attention to colleagues in Latin America and the Caribbean, specifically the REBLAC network. BCNet aims to strengthen its cooperation and collaboration with REBLAC, and through this enhance the research outputs and resilience of our combined efforts now and in the future. The current issue is completed by information on meetings, recent key publications, as well as research collaboration opportunities.

The strength of the BCNet comes from the engagement of its members, and we invite our members to feel free to contact us at any time – your comments and input are always welcome

Zisis Kozlakidis and Tracy Wootton

## BCNet Coordinators



Dr Zisis Kozlakidis at AORTIC 2025 presenting the history, milestones and achievements of BCNet.

## News from our members



### Strengthening Cancer Biobanking Capacity in Peru through the National Tumor Bank and the French Cooperation

The National Cancer Law of Peru (2021) created an unprecedented opportunity for the establishment and rapid consolidation of the National Tumor Bank (BNT) at the National Cancer Institute (INEN). It also mandated the implementation of the National Tumor Bank Network (Red Nacional de Bancos de Tumores – RNBT), reflecting a strategic commitment by Peruvian authorities to advance cancer research and ensure the representativeness of the country's oncological pathology. This initiative marks a transformative milestone for cancer research in Peru, spearheaded by INEN with strong support of the Ministry of Health of Peru, the French FSPI program ("Fortaleciendo la Salud en el Perú"), IRD, and the Institute Pasteur.

The project has established a decentralized, interoperable, and ethically governed biobanking system aligned with the National Cancer Law (N°31336), international standards (ISO 20387, SPREC), and harmonized governance policies. A coordinated national network optimizes resources, reinforces sustainability, and significantly strengthens translational research capacity.



Between 2023 and 2025, the project achieved major advances, including (i) upgrading infrastructure with high-performance biostorage systems, (ii) deployment of a national laboratory information management system (LIMS), and (iii) training multidisciplinary teams from the regional cancer institutes in La Libertad, Junín, Arequipa, as well as

emerging hospital-based biobanks in Cusco and Loreto. Capacity building included six regional professionals trained at INEN and one specialist completing a six-month advanced internship at the Institute Pasteur (Paris, France) focused on infections-associated cancers, women's cancer, and vulnerable populations.

The BNT-INEN has been formally incorporated into BCNet, the international biobanking network coordinated by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), actively contributes to REBLAC, and hosted the 2024 International Biobanking Congress in Lima. The RNBT supports large-scale molecular and viral epidemiology projects, including exposome-related surveillance, POLE mutation profiling in endometrial cancer, HPV genotyping in retinoblastoma, and pathogen detection in lymphomas. The forthcoming Peruvian Genomic Cancer Biobank represents the next step toward integrating molecular epidemiology into national cancer prevention and precision oncology policies.

This coordinated effort positions Peru as an emerging regional leader in cancer biobanking, research equity, and international scientific cooperation.

*With thanks to Sandro Casavilca Zambrano, MPh, PhD. (BCNet, Peru) for contributing this article.*



Photos on this page:

The Biobank team visit to Iquitos, the capital of Loreto in the Peruvian Amazon, where they met and engaged with regional authorities.

## Upcoming meetings



### ISBER Global Biobanking Congress - "Global Collaboration for Advanced Technology and Innovation."

ISBER is proud to partner with the Biobank Branch, China Medicinal Biotech Association (BBCMBA) and BGI for the World Biobanking Congress 2026, taking place **April 21–25, 2026**, in Shenzhen, China.

The event features two major international gatherings:

1. **ISBER Global Biobanking Congress:** Global Collaboration for Advanced Technology and Innovation

April 21–23, 2026, at the BGI Center

2. **BBCMBA 18th China Holistic Integrate Biobankology Conference & 13th Hospital Dean's Summit on Biobank**

April 23–25, 2026, at the InterContinental Shenzhen Dameisha Resort

*(Note: Delivered in Chinese only)*

#### Highlight:

The collaborative day on April 23 at BGI Center will serve as a central platform for fostering international partnerships, shared learning, and innovation within the global biobanking community.

#### Key Opportunities:

- Bundle Pass: Join both ISBER and BBCMBA congresses at a discounted rate
- Member rates: Reduced rates for ISBER members

- Other discounts: Students, technicians, and biobankers from low- to upper-middle-income countries

#### What to Expect:

- Scientific Program: Abstract-driven, focused on the theme Global Collaboration for Advanced Technology and Innovation, with daily keynote lectures from:
  - Dr Zisis Kozlakidis, PhD, MBA – IARC/WHO, France
  - Dr SU Xinying, MD, PhD – Pfizer, China
  - Prof. CHEN Wan-Tao, MD, PhD – Shanghai Ninth People's Hospital, China
- Destination-driven networking & social events:
  - Complimentary visit to the BGI Research Center
  - Self-paced run/walk along a scenic beach path
  - Chinese Banquet featuring dinner and cultural performance
  - Ample opportunities to connect with fellow biobankers

[View the full program and register today.](#)



### The Global Exposome Summit takes place on 27-29 April 2026 in Sitges (Barcelona) at the Hotel Melià Sitges

The growing number of human exposome research programmes and projects in recent years has boosted research output and led to the creation of new initiatives and infrastructures worldwide. Yet, cooperation and support between these initiatives remains sporadic and elusive. To bridge this gap, the International Human Exposome Network (IHEN) and the Global Exposome Forum (GEF) are joining forces to organize the Global Exposome Summit 2026.

[Click here](#) for more information.

## Upcoming meetings (cont.)



### Scaling Digital Health Innovations: From Digital Pilots to System-Wide Transformation, May 16 2026, all virtual conference.

Topics include:

- The journey from an idea to prototype
- Combining technological innovation with human-centered design
- Scaling innovations and interoperability
- Inclusion and equity in digital health innovations
- Biobanking 4.0

The Advancing Healthcare Innovation Summit (AHIS) is presented by the Innovative Healthcare Institute and Innovations in Digital Health, Diagnostics, and Biomarkers.

Join the conference for a day of knowledge and networking with colleagues who are committed to studying applications of artificial intelligence in digital health systems.

[Click here](#) for more information.



Data  
Discovery  
Prevention  
Knowledge

### IARC@60 International Scientific Conference: Cancer Research into Action, 19 – 21 May 2026, Lyon, France

To close its wonderful 60th anniversary year, IARC will offer you the opportunity to register for a major scientific conference that will take place over three days, from 19 to 21 May 2026. This conference will bring together experts from around the world and will be held at IARC and la Halle Tony Garnier.

[Click here](#) for more information.



### Europe Biobank Week 2026, May 19-22nd 2026, Prague

Join the most important event of the year in the global biobanking community from 19-22 May 2026 at the Prague Congress Centre.

The congress will highlight state-of-the-art biobanking innovations and research. This action-packed congress will feature keynote presentations, panels and workshops organized by ESBB and BBMRI-ERIC.



### Curious2027 – “Future Insight - United by Science for a Better Tomorrow”

On 7 & 8 July, 2027, leading scientists, among them many Nobel laureates, CEOs and top young talent from across the globe will come together in Heidelberg, Germany for a conference like no other.

The conference will explore transformative advancements in:

- Human health and nutrition
- Synthetic biology
- Smart materials
- Enhanced microchip technology
- Renewable energy
- AI, digitalization, and robotics
- Mobility and space exploration
- The secrets of the human mind
- New ways of working together

Online participation is also possible.

More information can be found on the website: <https://curiousfutureinsight.org>

## Opportunities for funding, training & collaboration



### ISBER Sponsorship Opportunities 2026: ways for industry partners to engage with the global biobanking community



Sponsorship and exhibition opportunities are now available for the ISBER 2026 Global Biobanking Congress (April 21–23, 2026, BGI Center, Shenzhen).

You are invited to share the sponsorship and exhibition prospectus with companies and partners you collaborate with, helping ensure a strong, diverse industry presence.

[View and share the prospectus](#) and help us connect with partners who support and advance the global biobanking field!



The **Best Practices 5 Webinar Series** was developed to support the global biobanking community in understanding and implementing the latest edition of ISBER's Best Practices for Repositories. The series offered a practical, structured exploration of key updates from BP4 to BP5, with a strong focus on real-world application and shared learning.

### **Key Features:**

- Highlighting major changes from BP4 to BP5
- Applying updated Best Practices across diverse biobank settings
- Lessons learned from biobank implementations worldwide
- Expert-led presentations with case-based examples

### **Delivery – On Demand:**

- Five webinars, each 70–90 minutes, available to watch at your own pace
- Can be purchased individually or as a complete five-part series depending on topics of interest
- Includes access to recordings so you can review key content whenever it's convenient

### **Pricing & Access:**

- **Individual webinars:** \$25 (members) | \$40 (non-members)
- **Full five-part series:** \$100 (members) | \$175 (non-members)

[Access the BP5 Webinar Series on demand](#)

## Seeking input from Biobank & Biorepository Managers!

### **Global Biobank Survey: Contributing to Diagnostic Development for Priority Infectious Diseases**

As part of a global biobank landscaping initiative supported by the Gates Foundation, consultant Elena Reipold is leading an analysis to identify biobanks and biorepositories that may be able to support diagnostic research and development through access to well-characterized, high-quality biological samples, with a particular focus on priority infectious diseases.

The objective of this initiative is to better understand existing biobank resources worldwide and their accessibility to external researchers and commercial diagnostic developers, to facilitate future collaborations and accelerate diagnostic innovation.

To support this effort, biobanks and biorepositories are invited to provide information on their collections and access conditions, including:

- Access policies for external researchers and commercial diagnostic developers
- Conditions for sharing samples across institutions or internationally
- Governance and review mechanisms for sample requests

- Overall size of collections (number of unique donors and specimens)
- Availability of catalogues or descriptions of specimens

Participation involves completing a **short online survey**, which takes approximately **15 minutes**:

[Click here to access the survey:](#)

Contributing to this survey will help increase the visibility of participating biobanks, ensuring their resources are accurately represented in future analyses and potential **collaboration opportunities related to diagnostic research and development**.

Additional background on the scope and objectives of the landscaping initiative is available via [this LinkedIn post](#).

Biobanks are encouraged to share this invitation internally with the most appropriate contact person. Opportunities for follow-up discussion are also available if further clarification is helpful.



[www.gene-diagnostic-solutions.com](http://www.gene-diagnostic-solutions.com)

### **Call for Collaboration – Provide Sequencing Data to Support a Breakthrough Algorithm for T-cell Clonality Analysis**

Gene-Diagnostic-Solutions (GDS) is seeking clinical partners, biobanks, and medical networks to collaborate with their team on the validation of a novel mathematical algorithm developed to improve the diagnosis of T-cell lymphoproliferative diseases (LPD) through massive parallel sequencing (MPS) data analysis:

#### **Background & Rationale**

Accurate identification of T-cell monoclonality is essential for diagnosing T-cell LPDs, including T-cell lymphomas. Current methods such as conventional PCR suffer from interpretive ambiguity, leading to false positives and false negatives due to limited sensitivity and specificity.

Although MPS allows for nucleotide-level analysis of T-cell receptor (TCR) sequences, existing

computational approaches to clonality detection often produce inconsistent results.

To overcome these limitations, our team has developed an innovative algorithm, based on rigorous mathematical and statistical modelling in close collaboration with the Centre for Environmental and Occupational Health, School of Public Health, Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Brussels, Belgium

#### **Objective & Impact**

Our goal is to work jointly with partners to validate and refine this algorithm using a diverse and extensive collection of sequencing datasets. Through this collaborative effort, we aim to:

- Establish a more robust and reliable method for T-cell clonality detection.
- Improve diagnostic accuracy and clinical decision-making in T-cell LPD.
- Lay the groundwork for broader applications, including in B-cell lymphoproliferative disorders.

#### **What We Are Looking For**

We invite collaboration from institutions willing to work directly with our team and contribute to the development and validation process. Specifically, we are seeking:

- Massive parallel sequencing datasets (FASTQ or processed) from patients with T-cell LPD and from healthy donors. Associated clinical and morphological data would also be highly valuable.
- Partners open to scientific collaboration, with mutual input on data interpretation, analysis, and publication.

**Important:** we are not requesting physical specimens (e.g., blood, cells, or tissues). Our work is entirely data-based, and we rely exclusively on digital sequencing files.

#### **Why Collaborate with Us?**

- Contribute to the advancement of diagnostics in hematopathology.
- Participate in a collaborative, interdisciplinary effort with direct clinical relevance.
- Gain early access to a novel algorithm and contribute to its refinement and validation.
- Co-author potential publications resulting from the joint research effort.

If you are interested in contributing data or joining this collaborative effort, please contact:

**Dr. Valéry Daubie, MD, PhD, MSc:** [vda@gene-diagnostic-solutions.com](mailto:vda@gene-diagnostic-solutions.com)

## Recent publications from our Members



[Astiz N, Martínez de Aguirre P, Carlos S, et al. Long-term stability of dried blood spot samples for HIV diagnosis in adults from Kinshasa \(Democratic Republic of Congo\). \*J Clin Virol.\* 2026; 182: 105910. PMID: 41477936](#)

[González-José R, Alfaro E, Arencibia V, et al. Program of Genomic Reference and Biobank of the Argentinian Population: A National Initiative for Genomic Equity and Population-Based Research in Argentina. \*Biopreserv Biobank.\* 2025; 23 \(6\): 512-522. PMID: 41192839](#)

[Kutyabami P, Muyinda H, Mukuru M, et al. Unmasking the ethical dimensions of data-sharing in health research: perspectives from researchers at a public university in Uganda. \*BMC Med Ethics.\* 2025. PMID: 41413505](#)

[Luna-Viramontes NI, Morlett-Paredes A, Ordoñez-Lozano I, et al. Brain banks in Latin America: Infrastructure for diagnosis, research, and scientific equity in Mexico and the Caribbean. \*Alzheimers Dement.\* 2025; 21 \(11\): e70819. PMID: 41207874](#)

[Shayanrad A, Mousavi S, Eftekhari S, et al. PERSIAN cohort biobank: creating a large-scale national resource for biomedical research in Iran. \*BMC Public Health.\* 2025; 25 \(1\): 4125. PMID: 41286709](#)

[Zhang T-Y, Lu E-P, Lin Y, et al. Factoring fungi into the One Health conversation. \*Fundamental Research\* 2026; \(In press\)](#)

[Kozlakidis Z, Wootton T, Mayrhofer MT. Through the looking glass: ethical considerations regarding LLM-induced hallucinations to medical questions. \*Front. Digit. Health\* 2026;\(In press\)](#)

### Books:

[\*\*Organizational Insights: Healthcare Perspective.\*\* Editor: Alkaway B. \*An Introduction to the Dynamics of Healthcare Excellence.\* Springer Nature. 1996](#)

This open access book offers unique insights into organizational management in healthcare. It helps healthcare professionals understand how the unique imprints of healthcare organizations shape their identity drawing from practical experiences and evidence-based practices to promote positive change in the industry. The book also addresses the

importance of adaptability in health systems in creating dynamic and resilient organizational structures. In this way, it conveys a sense of depth, understanding, and holistic mark of healthcare organizations' dedication to elevating organizational success.



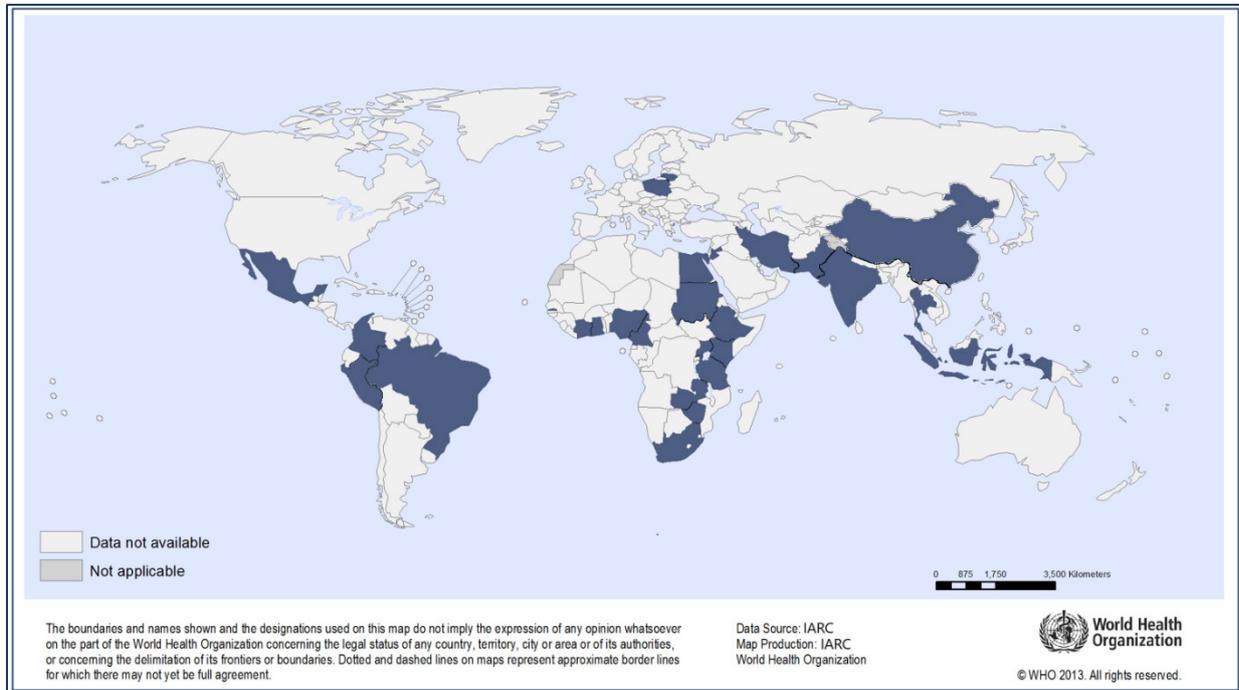
### **Malaysian Guidelines on the Use of Human Biological Samples for Research 2025 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Ministry of Health Malaysia.**

Dr Zisis Kozlakidis, Head of Laboratory Support, Biobanking, and Services at the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), served as an external reviewer for the newly published second edition of the *Malaysian Guidelines on the Use of Human Biological Samples for Research*, published by the National Institutes of Health, Ministry of Health, Malaysia. Dr Kozlakidis reviewed the guidelines as part of the activities of the IARC-led Low- and Middle-Income Countries Biobank and Cohort Building Network (BCNet) initiative.

The guidelines outline the conditions under which human biological samples that are collected within Malaysia can be used for research. This second edition includes lessons learned from the implementation of the original guidelines, the needs that emerged through the COVID-19 pandemic, and a dedicated focus on the associated data that are collected alongside the physical samples, as well as a clear outline for the secondary use of data.

This publication provides clear guidance for the growing number of research infrastructures within Malaysia, such as biobanks and data repositories. It is also a testament to the significant impact of IARC and BCNet on national policies and guidelines in health-care research, in this case with the help of long-time IARC collaborators Dr Hans Prakash Sathasivam, Director of the Malaysian National Biobank at the Malaysian National Institutes of Health and a BCNet member, and Dr Subasri Armon, Head of the Molecular Pathology Laboratory at Kuala Lumpur Hospital.

# BCNet Members



**BRAZIL:** Banco de Células do Rio de Janeiro; Barretos Cancer Hospital; Instituto do Câncer do Estado de São Paulo/Fundação Faculdade de Medicina; **CAMEROON:** Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, Université de Yaoundé; Université des Montagnes; **CHINA:** Macau Society for Health Economics; **COLOMBIA:** Clinica de la Costa Ltda; **CÔTE D’IVOIRE:** Institut Pasteur de Côte d’Ivoire; **EGYPT:** Aswan University; Children’s Cancer Hospital Egypt – 57357; Faculty of Medicine, Cairo University; Integrated Biobank of Mansoura, School of Medicine, Mansoura University; Medical Research Institute, Ain Shams University; Medical Research Institute, Alexandria University; National Cancer Institute; National Liver Institute; National Museum of Egyptian Civilization; Shifaa Al Orman Hospital, Luxor; South Egypt Cancer Institute, Assiut University; Suez Canal University; Theodor Bilharz Research Institute; **ETHIOPIA:** Jigjiga University; **GHANA:** Breast Care International, University of Health and Allied Sciences; Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, University of Ghana; **INDONESIA:** Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Gadjah Mada; **IRAN:** Golestan Cancer Biobank; **JORDAN:** King Hussein Cancer Center Biobank; **KENYA:** Ampath Reference Laboratory; Maseno University; **LITHUANIA:** National Cancer Institute; **MEXICO:** Instituto Nacional de Cancerología; **NIGERIA:** College of Medicine, University of Ibadan; Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital; Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex; **PAKISTAN:** Indus Hospital & Health Network; Liaquat University of Medical Health and Sciences; Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre; **PERU:** Instituto Nacional de Enfermedades Neoplásicas; **POLAND:** Biobank Lab, Department of Molecular Biophysics, University of Lodz; Wrocław Research Centre EIT+ Biobank; **SOUTH AFRICA:** National Health Laboratory Service, NHLS/Stellenbosch University Biobank; **SUDAN:** Institute of Endemic Diseases (IEND), University of Khartoum; Radio-Isotope Centre Khartoum; **THAILAND:** National Cancer Institute; **THE GAMBIA:** Medical Research Council (MRC) The Gambia Unit; MRC International Nutrition Group; **UGANDA:** Makerere University College of Health Sciences; **UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA:** Kilimanjaro Clinical Research Institute; **ZAMBIA:** Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia; **ZIMBABWE:** African Institute of Biomedical Science & Technology; University of Zimbabwe College of Health Sciences.

## BCNet Partners



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