BCNetter

Issue No. 30, June 2026

Dear BCNet Members,

Dr Tshass Chasinga Baharanyi and Dr Zisis Kozlakidis at the IARC 60th anniversary conference

Over the past months, BCNet continued to strengthen its role as a collaborative platform for advancing biobanking and biomolecular resources globally. Key activities focused on training, expanding network membership, fostering cross-institutional partnerships, and enhancing sample and data standardization frameworks to support high-quality research. BCNet also prioritized capacity building through targeted training sessions, workshops, webinars and knowledge exchange initiatives among collaborating opportunities. The efforts to harmonize standards and promote best practices in biospecimen management have remained central, ensuring consistency and interoperability across the network. In parallel, the network engaged with stakeholders to align its activities with emerging priorities in global health and biomedical innovation.

The current BCNetter presents only a selection of these collaborations, presentations and engagements. From the growing collaboration between REBLAC and BCNet, to the BCNet input to the Second Open Expert Meeting on the Revision of the WMA Declaration of Taipei, and the presentation in several meetings. These include, but are not limited to, the joint ISBER-BBCMBA Annual meeting, the EBW, the Global Exposome Summit, the annual ISO TC276: Biotechnology meeting, and the launch meeting of the International Alliance of Personalized Medicine. Of course, these are only short summaries and further details are to be found on the websites of each organization. However, they do showcase the increasing reach and impact of BCNet.

We continue the BCNetter with the upcoming educational opportunities, incorporating upcoming collaborative research opportunities, and an overview of relevant publications from our members. The field of biobanking as infrastructure is maturing and this is evident by the breadth of scientific output that is produced across the world. BCNet members should feel proud that their consistent input is part of the forces that drive the field forward.

We are pleased to welcome a new member to the BCNet network. 64 Codon Pvt. Ltd., based in India, is a bioscience company and open-network commercial biobank that brings together hospitals, laboratories, and researchers to advance healthcare and biomedical research. It provides access to ethically collected, well-curated, high-quality human biospecimens and associated data to support translational research and scientific discovery.

Operating in a low- and middle-income country (LMIC) setting, the company is committed to strengthening biobanking capacity, expanding access to diverse population data, and supporting globally relevant research on underrepresented populations.

Zisis Kozlakidis and Tracy Wootton

BCNet Coordinators

Second Open Expert Meeting on the Revision of the WMA Declaration of Taipei, Sao Paolo, Brazil, 5-6 March 2026

Jana Pavlič-Zupanc and Elodie Caboux

Dr Elodie Caboux (IARC/WHO) presented *"International Perspectives on Data & Biospecimen Use in the Era of Digital Health and AI"* during the Second Open Expert Meeting on the Revision of the WMA Declaration of Taipei, that took place on 5th and 6th March in Sao Paolo, Brazil.

Her presentation highlighted the growing role of biobanks and health databases in supporting modern medical research, as well as the shift toward AI-driven and data-intensive research systems.

Dr Caboux also discussed emerging governance challenges including secondary data use, re-identification risks, and algorithmic bias and emphasized the need for strong ethical frameworks and international collaboration to ensure responsible and equitable use of health data and biospecimens.

Elodie Caboux and Jana Pavlič-Zupanc, Head of Public Affairs at BBMRI-ERIC, jointly contributing to the Special Session: International Perspectives on Data and Biospecimen Use.

Visit of IARC/WHO at BNT/INCA, to share experience on ISO20387 implementation, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, 2-13 March 2026

Dr Elodie Caboux (IARC/WHO) visited the National Tumor and DNA Bank (BNT) of INCA, Brazil, to share experience on the implementation of the ISO20387 norm. She was warmly welcomed by Dr Rosilene de Lima Pinheiro (Head of the BNT biobank) and her team (Diego José Gomes de Paula and Leandro Fernandes Duarte). The discussions highlight key aspects for biobank operations: increasing visibility, strengthening human resources, and process evaluation. Upgrading IT systems, enhancing sample traceability and storage, and reinforcing biosafety. Strategic priorities include sustainability, and reinforcement of KPIs.

Working meetings were held with Dr Luis Felipe Ribeiro Pinto, Research Unit coordinator at INCA and coordinator of the REBLAC (Red de Biobancos de Latinoamérica y del Caribe) about the collaboration and joint projects between REBLAC and BCNet. A questionnaire sent to 24 REBLAC biobanks received 16 responses and was analyzed during those meetings. The main conclusions from this preliminary analysis were (1) the need to engage more Brazilian cancer biobanks, (2) to address discrepancies through follow-up surveys, and (3) to publish results comparable to the global landscape.

From left to right: Diego José Gomes de Paula, Elodie Caboux, Rosilene de Lima Pinheiro and Leandro Fernandes Duarte

To deepen this sharing of experiences and reinforce the collaboration between INCA and IARC, and between REBLAC and BCNet a visit at IARC of Dr Rosilene de Lima Pinheiro and Dr Luis Felipe Ribeiro Pinto was reciprocated in May 2026.

Luis Felipe Ribeiro Pinto and Elodie Caboux

Dr Stéphanie Villar attended the 2026 European Biobank Week conference in Prague, Hungary, 19-21 May 2026.

EBW26, held in Prague and organized by ESBB and BBMRI-ERIC, was once again the largest networking event in the biobanking community. The conference provided an excellent opportunity to meet colleagues from BBMRI, other biobanks, infrastructures and industry representatives, as well as to discuss the latest developments and key topics with experts from healthcare, academia, and industry. Participants also benefited from a high-quality scientific programme covering a wide range of current issues in biobanking.

Dr Stéphanie Villar, representing the IARC Biobank, co-chaired the session *"The EHDS Unveiled: Latest Developments and National Perspectives"* together with Ricard Martinez. She also presented two posters: *"Green Biobanking: Frameworks, Implementation, and Impact Measurement"* and *"Social Acceptance of Artificial Intelligence in Biobanking."*

The event provided a valuable opportunity to reconnect with several collaborators, including Dr Hélène Blanché from the Fondation Jean Dausset-CEPH; Dr Céline Verstuyft, Séverine Tabone, and Michael Hisbergues from the France Biobank Network (FrBioNET); Dr Liliana Virginia Siede from Argentina; Dr Elini Fthenou and Fatima Kafood from the Qatar Precision Health Institute (QPHI); Dr Judita Kinkorova from the University of Pilsen, Czech Republic, and BBMRI; and Dr Abhishek Mohanty from HCG Cancer Hospitals, Bangalore, India. Dr Villar also met students from the MSc in Biobanks & Complex Data Management programme, including Hadil Al Beaini, Hiba Rageh, Leonard Chibuike Ugochukwu, Aqib Marwat, and Mahamed Adnan.

In addition, the conference created new opportunities to establish collaborations and build relationships with professionals from around the world, including Dr Aurora Mejia from Mexico, Ricard Martinez from Spain, and many others.

International Alliance of Personalized Medicine Launch Event, Geneva, Switzerland, 19 May 2026

The launch event opened with a broad consensus that personalized medicine holds transformative potential, but that potential is unevenly distributed. A recurring theme was the gap between innovation and implementation; as a speaker put it, "innovation

without access is discrimination, and innovation without implementation is just imagination."

Access and Equity: Participants raised concerns about the lack of sustained political action on health equity. Geographic disparities were front and center with the striking example of lung cancer survivorship illustrating the divide. In well-resourced settings, targeted therapies and immunotherapy have dramatically extended survival for certain subtypes, with some patients now living years beyond what was previously possible. Yet in other countries, median survival for advanced lung cancer remains at around 7-8 months. Gender equity was also featured, with AI highlighted as a promising tool for closing diagnostic gaps, particularly for women in low-resource settings through remote monitoring and emergency diagnosis support.

Governance and Stewardship: Personalized medicine was framed not as an end in itself, but as a tool that must be governed ethically and transparently. A key concern was the risk of losing data stewardship to commercial interests, particularly insurance companies, which could create perverse incentives around patient data.

Infrastructure and Implementation: The pandemic strengthened the genomic surveillance infrastructure of countries. However, this capacity has yet to be integrated into routine healthcare, pointing to implementation as the primary obstacle rather than innovation. Data sharing and management across international settings remains a critical bottleneck as well. Notably, personalized diagnostics were flagged as a neglected area deserving more attention through public-private cooperation, spanning academia, NGOs, the European Public Health Association and other professional groups, policy makers and governments.

The 2026 Global Exposome Summit, Sitges, Spain, 27-29 April 2026

The Global Exposome Summit 2026, jointly organized by the International Human Exposome Network (IHEN) and the Global Exposome Forum (GEF), brought together the international exposome community to strengthen collaboration and coordination in this rapidly evolving field.

Against a backdrop of growing numbers of exposome research programmes, projects, and infrastructures worldwide, the summit addressed the need for greater cooperation. The event served as a platform to foster international partnerships and advance global coordination on exposome science and its application to improving human health.

The summit attracted a diverse audience of researchers, policymakers, industry representatives, funding organizations, and other stakeholders involved in exposome research. Participants attended presentations from prominent speakers and early-career scientists, engaged with experts and innovators in the field, and learned about the latest scientific advances, methodologies, and practical applications in exposome research.

A significant part of the summit was devoted to building and strengthening the global exposome community. Participants shared key resources, discussed data infrastructures, and continued work on developing a roadmap to guide future exposome research and international collaboration.

Dr Zisis Kozlakidis participated in a panel session on 'Exposomics in practice: Next steps for cohorts' and presented a poster about '*Exposome Research for Global Impact: Future Priorities in LMICs'*. The work was developed through consultation with BCNet members and drew directly on their experiences, perspectives, and contributions. By combining member input with a review of existing literature, the study identified key gaps in current exposome research, including the under-representation of LMIC settings, the need for context-specific exposure assessment tools, and the importance of strengthening local research capacity and data governance. The poster highlighted the valuable role of BCNet members in shaping future research priorities and demonstrates how the network's collective expertise can help ensure that exposome science becomes relevant and impactful for LMICs.

ISO TC276: Biotechnology Meeting, Lyon, France, 31 May – 7 June, 2026

IARC/WHO hosted the 2026 annual meeting of the International Organization for Standardization's Technical Committee 276 (ISO/TC 276). The event brought together global biotechnology experts and professionals, including academic, institutional, and industrial stakeholders from 45 participating and 16 observing member countries/territories. With 100 in-person and 50 online participants, the meeting advanced international standardization. Key objectives included identifying current needs and gaps in the biotech landscape and reviewing existing and new standards to ensure they align with recent technological advances.

Working across five working groups and two subcommittees, TC 276 advanced initiatives in several specific areas: biobanking, cellular bioprocessing, organoids, nucleic acid and protein-based devices, micro-physiological systems (MPS/Organ-on-Chip), data processing, and analytical methods. To align definitions, standards and processes, the groups focused on harmonizing efforts based on published and ongoing internal work while proactively aligning with external technical committees. They also explored potential joint initiatives to leverage interdisciplinary insights from related fields. BCNet was represented by Drs Kozlakidis Z, Yu Y and Luong J.

These collaborative efforts generated strong consensus to deliver practical, fit-for-purpose documentation that researchers can easily implement, aligning with the ISO Strategy 2030 vision of "Making lives easier, safer and better". In reducing fragmentation across regulatory, data regimes and technical standards, these standards aim to create a trusted infrastructure that fosters trust, interoperability, quality, and safety. Ultimately, the Lyon meeting successfully drove the committee's current initiatives forward, establishing a structured strategic path for the future of global biotechnology.

ISBER-BBCMBA Joint Annual Conference, Shenzhen, China, 21-23 April 2026.

The ISBER–BBCMBA Joint 2026 Conference, held in Shenzhen, China, represented a landmark gathering of the global biobanking community, bringing together the International Society for Biological and Environmental Repositories (ISBER), the Biobank Branch of the China Medicinal Biotech Association (BBCMBA), and leading partners including BGI. Under the theme *"Global Collaboration for Advanced Technology and Innovation,"* the event fostered international partnerships, knowledge exchange, and innovation across the biobanking ecosystem.

The conference highlighted the critical role of biobanks in advancing precision medicine, public health, and biomedical research. Scientific sessions, keynote lectures, workshops, roundtables, and poster presentations explored emerging technologies, automation, quality management, data governance, biospecimen science, and workforce development. Particular emphasis was placed on standards harmonization, best practices, and strengthening global interoperability.

A defining feature of the meeting was the joint collaborative day between ISBER and BBCMBA, which enabled direct engagement between international and Chinese biobanking communities. This collaboration reinforced the importance of cross-border cooperation in addressing shared scientific and operational challenges. Overall, the conference demonstrated how global partnerships, technological innovation, and a commitment to quality can accelerate the future impact of biobanking on research, healthcare, and society.

Upcoming meetings

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.

Online participation is also possible.

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

UNESCO 2026 global conference on the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (2024-2033)

UNESCO welcomes you to join the first Global Conference of the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (IDSSD), a hybrid event taking place from 15–17 July 2026 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

More information can be found [here]

Recent publications from our Members

Aisyah DN, Kiasatina T, Setiawan AH, et al. Digital reporting in a decentralized public health system: lessons from Indonesia's micro PPKM experience. Frontiers in Public Health. 2026; Volume 14 - 2026.

Baharanyi TC, Basengere RA, Tunangoya JY, et al. Analysis of Anatomical pathology laboratory capabilities in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. PLOS Glob Public Health. 2026; 6 (3): e0006067.

Ezzemni S, Lam F, Al Korhani L, et al. 60 years of the IARC catalyzing capacity building for cancer prevention. J Natl Cancer Inst Monogr. 2026; 2026 (72): 102-113.

Fachiroh J, Ramadhani F, Hertanto NBWA, et al. Epstein–Barr Virus Latent Membrane Protein-1 (EBV LMP-1) in Nasopharyngeal Carcinoma: Immune Correlates and Potential as a Clinical Outcome Biomarker Indones. Biomed. J. 2026; 18 (1): 1-19.

Hong Y, Kalfakakou D, Cheong IH, et al. Leveraging real-time genomic surveillance to combat infectious diseases and antimicrobial resistance in cancer patients. Front Public Health. 2026; 14: 1763512.

Hou HX, Bisson T, Leiss SM, et al. BRIDGE pilot study: a bilateral regulatory investigation of data governance and exchange. npj Digital Medicine. 2026; 9 (1): 244.

Kozlakidis Z, Wootton T, Mayrhofer MT. Through the looking glass: ethical considerations regarding LLM-induced hallucinations to medical questions. Front Digit Health. 2026; 8: 1736616.

Li Q, Xu Z, Wu J, et al. The PABS system under the pandemic agreement: Current status, controversies in negotiations, and future trends. Biosafety and Health. 2026.

Luong JHC, Beggs J, Ferris J, et al. A maturity model framework for federated networks of trusted research environments. Front Digit Health. 2026; 8: 1699125.

Nanyonga S, Simeon-Dubach D, Kozlakidis Z. Biobanking Feasibility in Africa: Findings from a Pilot Survey by the Pan-African Biobanking Network. Biopreserv Biobank. 2026: 19475535261418097.

Opportunities for funding, training & collaboration

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.

GDS
Gene Diagnostic Solutions

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.

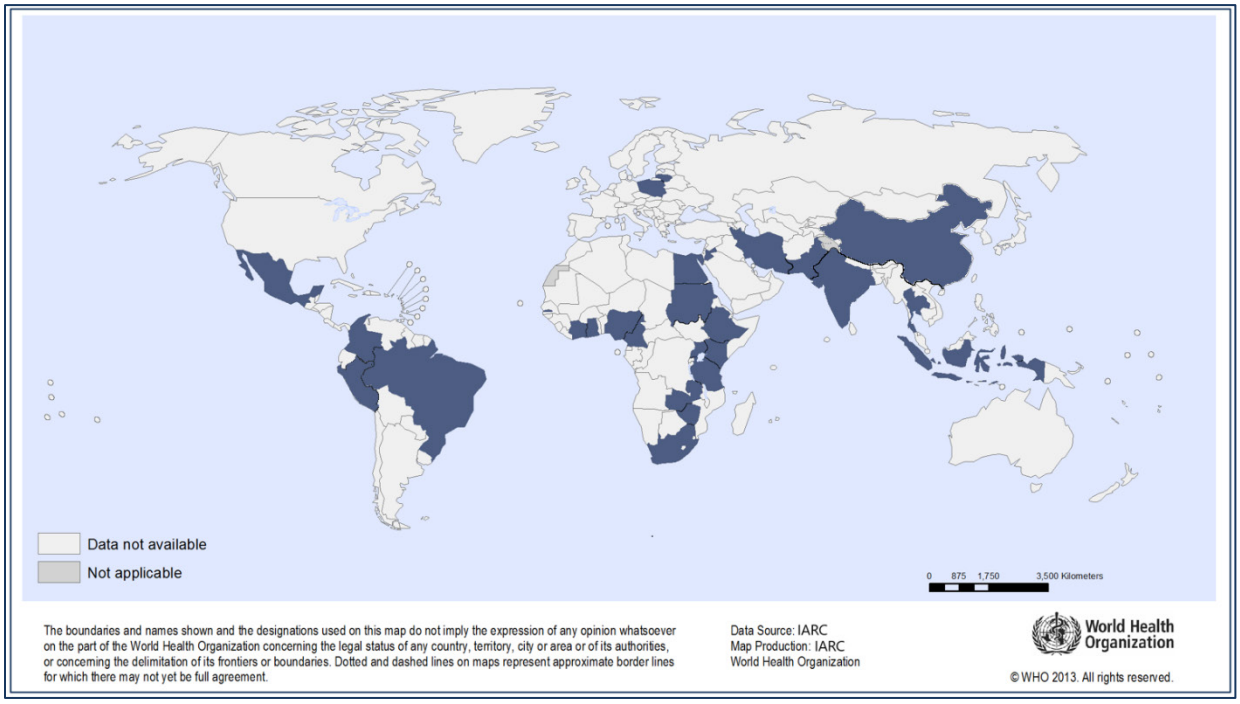
Why Collaborate with Us?

- 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

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: Ahram Canadian University; Aswan University; Children's Cancer Hospital Egypt – 57357; Faculty of Medicine, Ain Shams Research Institute; Faculty of Medicine, Cairo University; Integrated Biobank of Mansoura, School of Medicine, Mansoura 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; INDIA: Biobank India Foundation; 64 Codon Pvt. Ltd; 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

National Cancer Institute

BBMRI-ERIC® Biobanking and BioMolecular resources Research Infrastructure

Karolinska Institutet

AORTIC OAREC

P3G2 Policy Partnerships Project for Genomic Governance

ARC Net Applied Research on Cancer Ricerca Applicata sul Cancro

RINC Network of National Cancer Institutes and Institutions

UNASUR

CGP Centre of Genomics and Policy Centre de génomique et politiques

isber Connecting Repositories Globally through Best Practices leading since 1999

LMIC

BCNet

Contacts:

Dr Zisis Kozlakidis
KozlakidisZ@iarc.who.int

Ms Tracy Wootton
WoottonT@iarc.who.int

+33 4 72 73 80 35

http://bcnet.iarc.fr/