BCNetter

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Dear BCNet Members,



Dr Kozlakidis at the launch of National Biobank Network in Nigeria

Biobanking has become a cornerstone of modern biomedical research, providing high-quality, well-characterized biological samples and associated data within robust governance frameworks. Investment in sustainable biobanking infrastructure strengthens national research capacity by enhancing laboratory standards, sample management, data governance, and quality assurance systems. Particularly in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), such investments also support the training and retention of skilled scientists, laboratory professionals, data managers, and bioinformatics specialists, contributing to long-term scientific self-reliance and research sustainability.

A notable example is the launch of the National Biobank Network in Abuja, Nigeria, in the second week of October 2026. Researchers from the Nigerian National Institute for Cancer Research and Treatment (NICRAT), together with Dr Zisis Kozlakidis of IARC/WHO and BioVana partners, officially launched this ambitious initiative. The network aims to collect and catalogue 10,000 cancer biospecimens during its initial phase, expanding to 100,000 samples by 2028. NICRAT and health data infrastructure provider BioVana have jointly developed a practical framework that enables legally compliant and technically interoperable sample collection and health data collaboration. Currently comprising eight federal hospitals across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, the network is expected to strengthen cancer research, improve access to research-ready biological samples and data, and advance precision oncology both nationally and internationally.

In this edition of the newsletter, we highlight BCNet activities led by IARC/WHO and our partners around the world. We also present recent publications, announce upcoming biobanking conferences, and share other developments of interest to the biobanking community.

We are also pleased to welcome a new member to the BCNet network, Associação Genomas Brasil. This Brazilian non-profit association is dedicated to genomics research, population genetics, and precision medicine. Working closely with researchers from leading Brazilian institutions, it supports projects that explore the genetic diversity of the Brazilian population, contributing to scientific advancement and improved healthcare outcomes.

The strength of BCNet lies in the engagement and collaboration of its members. We encourage all members to reach out to us at any time. Your feedback, ideas, and contributions are highly valued and help shape the continued success of our network.

Zisis Kozlakidis and Tracy Wootton

BCNet Coordinators



Dr Kozlakidis speaking at the launch of the National Biobank Network in Abuja, Nigeria.

News from IARC

INTERCEPTOR COST Action Advances Collaboration and Research on Oral Cancer Prevention.



Dr Zisis Kozlakidis and Dr Stéphanie Villar attended the INTERCEPTOR working group meeting in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Podgorica, Montenegro, in September 2026.

The INTERCEPTOR (Interception of Oral Cancer) COST Action continues to address critical unmet needs in oral cancer prevention by advancing innovative approaches to the management of oral potentially malignant disorders (OPMDs). Through the integration of translational research, patient care, and education, the Action brings together multidisciplinary expertise to develop personalized strategies for OPMD prevention and management.

As INTERCEPTOR approaches the final phase of its programme, a visit to Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, was organized on 20–21 September 2026 to strengthen connections with local oral pathology experts and explore opportunities for future collaboration. The programme included a visit to the Head and Neck Surgery Department of the University Clinical Center of Sarajevo, where participants exchanged insights on ongoing clinical and scientific activities and visited selected clinical units. The visit also provided an opportunity to showcase INTERCEPTOR's achievements and discuss avenues for continued cooperation in oral cancer research.



This was followed by the INTERCEPTOR Working Group Meeting, held from 23–25 September 2026 at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Montenegro, Podgorica. The meeting brought together researchers and clinicians to review progress across several key initiatives, including the development of a Delphi consensus on a minimum OPMD research dataset, validation of a pathological classification and clinical decision-making algorithm, and a systematic review and meta-analysis of predictors of malignant transformation.

Additional discussions focused on pharmacological intervention studies, biomarker research, patient recruitment, and biobanking activities. The meeting provided an important opportunity to consolidate the project's achievements and define the final steps towards its completion. Among the priorities identified was the preparation of a comprehensive survey to map institutions working on OPMDs, their research infrastructure, available biological samples, and clinical datasets. This initiative is expected to facilitate new collaborations and lay the groundwork for future international research efforts in oral cancer prevention and early intervention.



BBMRI-ERIC Assembly of Members and Management Committee, Milan, Italy.



In October 2026, Dr Stephanie Villar attended the BBMRI-ERIC Assembly of Members meeting in Milan, Italy. The meeting marked an important milestone for the pan-European research infrastructure, which announced the accession of three new member countries: Portugal, Montenegro and Ukraine.

This expansion represents more than a geographical enlargement of the network. It also creates new opportunities for collaboration with Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs). The inclusion of Portugal is expected to strengthen engagement with Lusophone countries, while the accession of Montenegro and Ukraine enhances the visibility and importance of biobanking in Eastern Europe, a region that has historically been underrepresented in European research initiatives.

The continued growth of BBMRI-ERIC reflects the increasing recognition of biobanking as a critical component of biomedical research and highlights the value of international cooperation in advancing scientific discovery and innovation.

Further information is available on the BBMRI-ERIC website and will also be presented during the upcoming European Biobank Week conference.

Global Biobank Awareness Initiative

An ISBER Task Force has been the ground upon which the Global Biobank Awareness Initiative was discussed in 2025. The Global Biobank Awareness Task Force is led by Cassandra Griffin and Debra Leiolani Garcia and aims to raise awareness of the purpose, role and impact of biobanking on a global scale. The initiative is planned to ensure that the word 'biobank' becomes a well-recognized and understood term across all walks of life.
The objective of this initiative is to create a harmonized strategy to foster and strengthen global Advocacy, Appreciation and Awareness for the role that biobanks and biorepositories play worldwide. There are several videos on the website – and BCNet members should feel free to contribute their own at https://www.globalbiobankawareness.net/

UNGA Science Summit, Nairobi, Kenya



For the first time, the annual Science Summit, held alongside the 81st United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), extended beyond New York to include a dedicated programme in Nairobi, Kenya, from 28 to 30 September 2026. Hosted at the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), with additional sessions held at the Embassy of Ireland in Kenya, the event brought together experts and stakeholders from around the world to explore the role of science in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the importance of investing in African-led research. BCNet was represented by Dr Rita Lawlor and Dr Zisis Kozlakidis.

The programme opened with discussions on the governance, investment, and sustainable development dimensions of artificial intelligence (AI) in Africa, placing the continent's priorities within a rapidly evolving global landscape. This was followed by a keynote address from Prof. Shaukat Abdulrazak, Principal Secretary in Kenya's State Department for Science, Research and Innovation (SRI), who highlighted the importance of strengthening research ecosystems and innovation capacity across Africa.

The Nairobi programme demonstrated the growing recognition of Africa's central role in addressing global health, development, and sustainability

challenges through science and innovation. The strong participation and high level of engagement contributed to the event's overall success and underscored the value of creating platforms for scientific dialogue and collaboration across regions.

More details on this very successful event are on the Science Summit website and on Facebook.

As the first Science Summit UNGA programme to be held outside New York, its success suggests that similar regional events may become a regular feature in the years ahead.

BBMRI-ERIC Webinar



Cancer is an increasingly urgent public health challenge in many middle-income countries, where health systems face constrained resources. In this context, strengthening cancer research and regulatory frameworks requires not only technical capacity, but also inclusive, participatory approaches that meaningfully engage patients and communities.

This webinar brought together experts, including from LMICs, to explore how participatory models can enhance the effectiveness of oncology research and decision-making.

A key focus of the discussion was on practical mechanisms for embedding patient engagement within regulatory systems, including advisory boards and co-creation models. Particular attention was paid to the challenges and opportunities specific to middle-income settings, such as resource constraints, health literacy and institutional capacity.

The video will be released in November 2026 as a podcast and on the BBMRI-ERIC YouTube channel https://www.youtube.com/@bbmrieric8061/featured

News from our members

News from South Africa, MBiRSA

The Medical Biorepositories of South Africa (MBirSA) is currently focused on expanding its national network of biorepositories, research collections, institutions and individuals involved in biobanking across South Africa. This reflects MBirSA's broader objective of strengthening coordination and collaboration and providing a national platform for the development and harmonisation of good biobanking practices.

A major upcoming activity is the MBirSA Summer School and Official Launch Event, which will take place from 18–20 November 2026. The Summer School will bring together individuals involved in biobanking and research collections from across South Africa, with a focus on capacity development, networking and advancing best practices. The programme encompasses key areas including biobank operations, quality management, ethics and governance, biosafety and biosecurity, data management, and sustainability.

https://mbirsa.org.za/mbirsa-summer-school-application/

News from Brazil

Brazil's Ministry of Health has established the Brazilian Biobank Network (RBBMS). The initiative will bring together public and private biobanks across the country and expand opportunities for strategic research in support of the Unified Health System (SUS), as announced on the 29th of October 2026 on the official government website. The

Ministry plans to strengthen cooperation between these facilities, establish knowledge exchange and promote the sharing of best practices, while encouraging joint and multicentre research projects. The network is expected to provide scientific data for medical studies and improve the accuracy of diagnosis and treatment within the public healthcare system.

Participation in the network is voluntary. It is open to 108 biobanks established and approved by the National Human Research Ethics System (Sinep). The network will be managed by the Secretariat of Science, Technology and Innovation in Health (SCTIE/MS), which will provide technical support, while the administrative autonomy of participating institutions will remain unchanged. A consultative and advisory steering committee will be established in 2027 to support the network's activities, including representatives of SCTIE/MS, RBBMS participants, the scientific community and civil society.

Exchange at the IARC Biobank Drives Excellence and Innovation for INCA's National Tumor Bank

From May 25 to 29, 2026, Rosilene de Lima Pinheiro, Coordinator of the National Tumor and DNA Bank (BNT) at the Brazilian National Cancer Institute (INCA), undertook a benchmarking and technical exchange mission at the Biobank of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in Lyon, France.

The initiative aimed to identify opportunities for continuous improvement in the BNT's governance and operational workflows. This effort aligns with the biobank's ongoing work toward obtaining ISO 20387 accreditation and maintaining its ISO 9001 certification, further solidifying its position as a reference biobank for oncology research.

The program included technical visits to the IARC biobank and laboratories, as well as to the biobanks at the Pierre Wertheimer Neurological Hospital and the Léon Bérard Center. These visits provided insight into operational routines, information systems, and quality management models. During the visit, the coordinator delivered a presentation on the recent trajectory of the BNT/INCA, highlighting the management restructuring process that led to the institution's ISO 9001 certification.

For Rosilene Pinheiro, the outcomes of the exchange extend beyond technical learning: "The mission served as a strategic opportunity to strengthen interinstitutional partnerships and disseminate knowledge, allowing me to share key trends and practices observed during the visits with the BNT team."

News from Vietnam



In October, Dr Tung Dinh Nguyen from the Vinmec Healthcare System, completed his observership at IARC/WHO, under the joint supervision of Dr Zisis Kozlakidis and Prof. Io Hong Cheong. He also spent time with Dr Chrysovalantou A. Chatziioannou and Christophe Lallemand, looking at research from a population-level perspective: how global data, biobanking and international collaboration shape the evidence we use every day. Through his observership, he gained valuable insight into biobanking, DNA extraction and metabolomics, and conversations across IARC's branches broadened his perspective further.



Dr Tung Dinh Nguyen and Dr Zisis Kozlakidis at IARC

Upcoming meetings



The **2027 ISBER Biobanking Congress** takes place from **4-6 May 2027** in San Diego, California, USA. The theme of the congress is **The Connected Biobank: Building the Future Through Specimens, Data, and Discovery.**
https://www.isber.org/page/2027ISBERGlobal
Early Bird rates are available until 17 February.



EBW27 takes place from **18-21 May 2027** at the SwissTech Convention Center, Lausanne, Switzerland.

Early bird registration is open until 28 January 2027, and special reduced rates are available for participants from Low, and Lower-middle income countries

https://www.europebiobankweek.eu/europe-biobank-week-2027/



The Advancing Healthcare Innovation Summit (AHIS) is an annual event presented by the Innovations in Digital Health, Diagnostics, and Biomarkers Journal.

AHIS 2027 will be held online on Saturday, June 5, 2027.
https://innovationsjournals-iddb.kglmeridian.com/page/AHIS

INTERCEPTOR
INTERCEPTION OF ORAL CANCER DEVELOPMENT

The **2027 INTERCEPTOR** oral cancer research consortium conference will be held at IARC/WHO premises in Lyon, France from **16-17 June.**
This is a placeholder for dates, more details will be provided in the next BCNetter.
https://interceptoralcancer.com/

Opportunities for funding, training & collaboration



IS Global Online Workshop Series: Multi-Omics Data Integration in Human Exposome Studies 2026.

The second edition of the online workshop series, "Multi-Omics Data Integration in Human Exposome Studies", is running from September to December 2026. Building on the foundational and introductory material covered in the first edition, the new series goes a step further.

Through practical, hands-on seminars, participants will explore state-of-the-art analytical frameworks and statistical workflows recently developed in exposomics. Each session will combine theoretical concepts with codes and implementation resources, enabling participants to apply the presented techniques in their own research endeavours.

You can consult the speaker list and full program here.

Participation is free of charge, click here to register.



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

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

Recent publications from our Members

Aijaz J, et al. Stakeholder Recommendations on Shaping Human Biospecimen Banking Governance in Pakistan. Biopreserv Biobank. 2026.

Aisyah DN, et al. Designing National-Scale Digital Preventive Health Systems: Architectural and Governance Patterns From Indonesia. 11th International Digital Public Health Conference (DPH), Barcelona, Spain. 2026.

Aisyah DN, et al. Nationwide implementation of digital non-communicable diseases screening in Indonesia's primary care system. Nature Communications. 2026.

Apisampinvong P, et al. Developing a national proficiency testing programme for biospecimens: the Thailand Biobank Consortium experience. J Clin Pathol. 2026.

Campanha Novaes LA, et al. Brazilian biorepository to support genome-wide association studies of colorectal, breast, and cervical cancer. iScience. 2026.

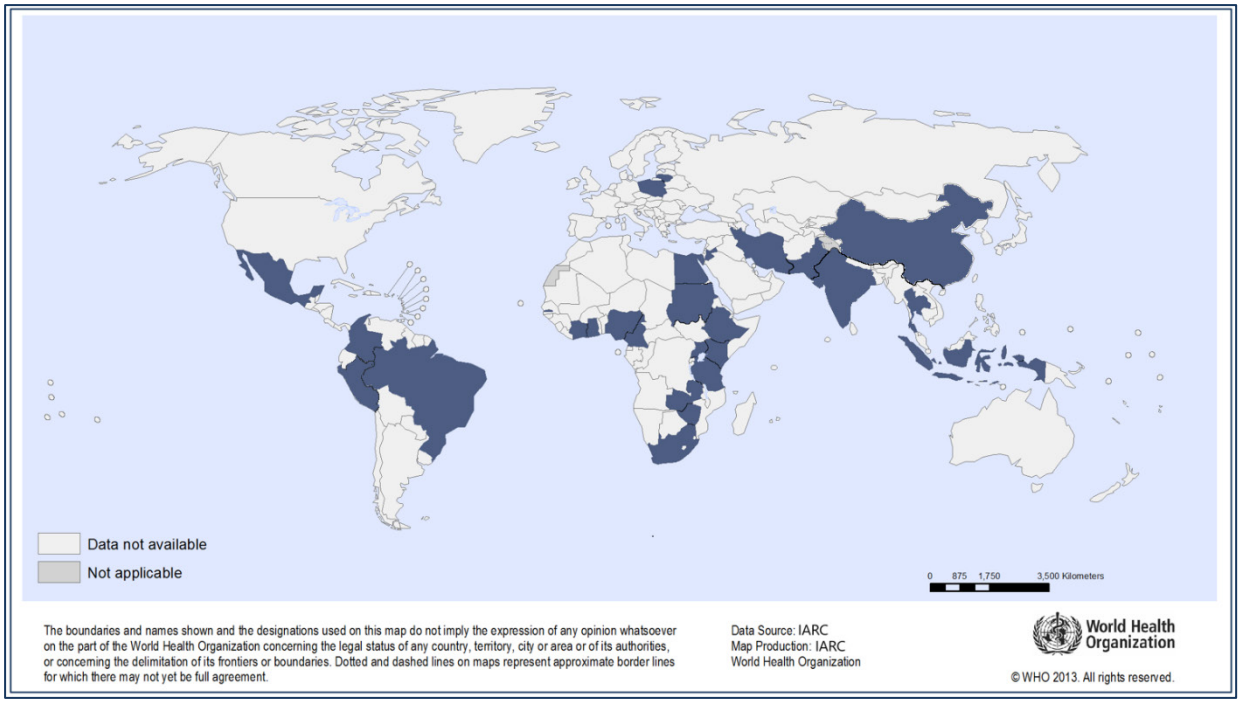
Griffin CP, et al. Global Biobank Awareness: An Initiative to Showcase Impact and Increase Global Visibility of Biobanks. Biopreserv Biobank. 2026.

Rahmadian R, et al. Perception-Reality Gap in Biobank Adoption: A Needs Assessment in a Resource-Limited Academic Center. Biopreserv Biobank. 2026.

Sepúlveda SA, et al. National Coordinated Care and Translational Research Program for Uveal Melanoma Pilot: Infrastructure, Biobanking, and Challenges in Liquid Biopsy Implementation in a Latin American Country. Ocul Oncol Pathol. 2026.

Zuniga M, et al. From ISO 9001:2015 to ISO 20387:2018: a proposed implementation roadmap for biobanks. Frontiers in Genetics. 2026.

BCNet Members



BRAZIL: Associação Genomas Brasil; 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

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

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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/