

EU funded project on quality of life (BD4QoL study)

We are part of a recently awarded EU programme grant entitled: Big Data Models and Intelligent tools for Quality of Life monitoring and participatory empowerment of head and neck cancer survivors (BD4QoL) led by Professor Lisa Licitra in Milan. The ultimate aim of the project is to improve the quality of life of people with head and neck cancer. The project will use sophisticated analysis of existing data from Head and Neck 5000 (and other studies with patient reported outcomes) to identify the predictors of quality of life. The project will also recruit participants to a new study of people with head and neck cancer in Bristol (and other centres in Europe) that will collect data from commonly used devices (such as mobile phones) to see if it is possible to identify those who need additional support or intervention to improve quality of life.

Severn Pathology for the Predictr2 study



Head and Neck 5000 has contributed 504 oropharyngeal tissue blocks (approximately 3500 tissue sections) to the Predictr2 study. Predictr2 is an MRC funded study led by Professor Hisham Mehanna at the University of Birmingham. The aim of the Predictr2 study is to develop a reliable biomarker classifier to help predict which patients with oropharyngeal cancer may benefit from having surgery alongside chemotherapy and radiotherapy. This is a collaborative multicentre study that requires input from a team of Consultant Pathologists and NHS laboratory staff from across the UK

We are most grateful to the cellular pathology team at Severn Pathology (North Bristol Trust) for their tremendous effort in supporting and facilitating the Predictr2 study and achieving the challenging deadlines that they were set for completing the lab work. Special thanks to Mr Andrew Staton who has directed and co-ordinated the laboratory component of this project including the tissue sectioning and antibody workup.

The very busy NHS lab staff at Severn Pathology are to be congratulated for the high quality work, dedication and enthusiasm in supporting this clinical and translational pathology centred research project. They have done a fabulous job!

HEADSpAcE Pathology meeting in Bogota, Colombia, September 2019

As described in our June newsletter Translational Studies of Head and Neck Cancer in South America and Europe (HEADSpAcE) is a project funded by the European Union that started in January 2019. The project brings together a consortium of 15 partner institutions from across Europe, the USA, Canada and South America. This study will investigate multiple reasons for the poor prognosis of Head and Neck cancers, including individual and structural reasons for late diagnosis; the influence of lifestyle, infectious and genetic factors on poor outcome; and the adherence to clinical guidelines in various diagnostic settings. The study website is at <https://headspace.iarc.fr/>

Dr Pring attended the first HEADSpAcE pathology meeting in Bogota, Colombia on behalf of Head & Neck 5000 and met with Pathologists and basic scientists based in our partner organisations. The meeting was arranged to specifically progress work package 3 (WP3) of the HEADSpAcE study. This work package aims to determine the most accurate methodology and combinations of tests for screening and identifying Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) - driven oropharyngeal cancer in a clinical and diagnostic setting. During the meeting the pathologists agreed guidelines for standardising laboratory tests across the participating pathology units. The meeting included several interactive virtual microscopy workshops and laboratory based sessions to ensure standardisation also of the pathologists interpretation of test results and a selection of tissue based biomarker studies.



Slide scanning to produce a digital image library

To date, Head and Neck 5000 has received tissue blocks from 3094 participants. We have cut and stained representative tissue sections from all of the tissue blocks that have been donated. There is a natural tendency for the material to deteriorate over time and to counter this we are in the process of capturing digital images of the sections to preserve tissue and immortalise details of tumour morphology. The images will be stored within a dedicated histopathology imaging database that will link to a virtual microscope, capturing information that is also recorded within linked clinical pathology (diagnostic) reports. This process will immortalise the tumour histology, capturing potentially important diagnostic and prognostic information centred on tumour morphology, stromal interactions and in-vivo biological behaviour. This will create a novel histopathological database that will present additional opportunities for pathology centred collaborative research, facilitating sharing of the material both nationally and internationally. It will also present a valuable training and educational resource for the specialist Head and Neck Pathology community.

Head & Neck 5000 study update

Outstanding tissue samples for cases that we have flagged as being of particular interest have been chased and we are still receiving FFPE tissue blocks. We have requested slides where teams are unable to provide us with a tissue block. It is important that we collect as many samples as possible as the data on the unusual cases is of great interest. If your site has had a request for tissue please respond to this as soon as possible as we are keen to close down the site work for H&N5000 and we are aware that many sites would like to archive the study.

We are making progress with cleaning and coding on the follow-up study data and hope to have this completed soon.



Alex Whitmarsh

I joined the Head and Neck 5000 group as a research associate in statistics in September 2019. I studied at Cardiff University where I completed my undergraduate degree and PhD.

My PhD analysed the relationship between lifestyle and colorectal cancer using data from UK Biobank.

Before starting here, I spent some time teaching English in Colombia.