Welcome to the Spring 2018 edition of The Tumour Bank Bulletin. The weather is starting to warm up, the sun is shining and staff at the Kolling Institute Tumour Bank are busy consenting patients, collecting biospecimens and liaising with clinicians and researchers before the end of the year shut down period.

Two members of our team recently travelled interstate to attend the 16th annual Australasian Network Biospecimen Association conference in Melbourne, where they spent two days viewing academic and industry presentations and networking with other members of the national and international biobanking community. Held at the Pullman Mercure Albert Park, the theme of this years conference was ‘The Art of Biobanking’ which aimed to highlight the parallels between the cutting-edge techniques formed during the modern art movement, and the current climate for international biobanking. Both Ussha and Sam benefitted from the symposium for the professional update it provided, and valued the opportunity to meet and foster relationships with members from the wider biobanking community.

Breast and gynaecological cancer is a cause close to our hearts here at the Tumour Bank, so it was with full enthusiasm that on the 30th October we hosted a Pink Ribbon morning tea. Held across Australia by the Cancer Council, the Pink Ribbon campaign aims to raise funds for and awareness of cancers affecting women. Each day in Australia, 65 women are informed that they have breast or a gynaecological cancer, such as uterine, cervical, ovarian, vaginal or vulval. The money raised by the Pink Ribbon campaign goes towards prevention programs, support services and important cancer research, such as research that occurs at the Kolling Institute aided by samples from patients who donated to the Tumour Bank.

Currently, samples from the Tumour Bank are being distributed to a researcher from the Kolling Institute as part of a project investigating the role of long non-coding ribonucleic acid (RNA) in breast cancer. This non-coding RNA, which accounts for a substantial part of the genome that is not made into functional proteins, plays an important role in cancer development. Organisations such as the Cancer Council help fund research such as this through their Pink Ribbon campaign, and the Tumour Bank will continue to support these important fundraising programs.
Departing Sydney in the early hours of an overcast October morning, Ussha and Sam made the journey to Melbourne to represent the Kolling Institute Tumour Bank at the 16th Annual Australasian Biospecimen Network Association (ABNA) Conference. With the theme of ‘The Art of Biobanking’, this two day event compared the creative transformations displayed in modern art to the innovative new frontlines currently being explored by the global biobanking community.

The ABNA was established in 2001 when a number of scientists involved in biobanking within Australia recognised a need for distributing information and practices among professionals engaged in this emerging field. The first ABNA meeting was held in 2003 at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne, giving members of the biobanking community the chance to convene and discuss opportunities and challenges facing the industry. The association transformed in 2005 when a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Enabling Grant was awarded to a group of biobanking professionals involved in the oncology field, allowing the Australasian Biospecimen Network-Oncology (ABN-Onc) project to take responsibility for the fledgling biobanking ABNA operation. Since then, the ABN-Onc has held annual meetings across Australia and has assisted in directing the biobanking community towards the following common objectives:

- **Support** – Supporting new and emerging biobanks through procedural and protocol sharing, together with providing professional assistance.
- **Biospecimen Access** – Promoting biobanks throughout Australia and New Zealand to ensure high quality biospecimens are provided to support high quality research.
- **Networking** – Networking co-operatively and collaboratively with funding bodies and regulators to promote the interests of biobanking.

The 2018 ABNA conference featured prominent speakers involved in international and Australian biobanking, and highlighted a range of topics from translational research, to biobank workflows to 3D modelling. The theme of this year’s conference was chosen to encompass a diverse range of issues, including ‘Biobanking Today – Modern Biobanks’, ‘Indigenous Research’, ‘New Biobanking Standards and Quality’, ‘Emerging and Innovative Technologies’, ‘Registries, Data Linkage and Visualisation’, ‘Ethical, Legal and Societal Issues’ and ‘Community Engagement and Philanthropy’.

Sam Yuen, Biobank Officer at the Kolling Institute Tumour Bank presented a poster ‘Embedding research biobanking into the workflow of a diagnostic pathology laboratory – the Royal North Shore experience’. This current pilot project, run in partnership with the Anatomical Pathology department at Royal North Shore Hospital, is investigating the potential impact of embedding a routine biobanking workflow on a diagnostic pathology laboratory.

After being well received at this year’s ABNA conference, Sam is set to present this research again at the 35th Combined Health New Horizons symposium held at the Kolling Institute in November 2018. Attending these conferences are a valuable experience for staff at the Tumour Bank, allowing us to build and maintain relationships with the wider biobanking establishment.
Biobanks refer to a repository of biospecimens and associated clinical data collected from patients with a particular disease or from healthy volunteers. Cancer is the disease of focus in the case of the Kolling Institute Tumour Bank. The biological samples that are collected from hospitals or clinics are processed and stored in these biobanks, and can then be accessed by and distributed to researchers involved in scientifically and ethically-approved medical research projects.

Currently there are around 50 biobanks in operation across NSW. Each of these biobanks function independently, using a set of protocols and procedures that are specific to their service. Biobanks in NSW are predominantly small in scale, and communication and collaboration between these biobanking institutions is generally limited. As a result, these independent biobanks vary in biospecimen quality, extent of data linkage and access to clinical data, and quality management systems.

Launched in June 2016 by NSW Health Pathology as a key feature of the NSW Health Statewide Biobanking Framework, the NSW Biobank Certification Program arose from a need to address these inconsistencies between state biobanks. As the first of its kind in Australia, this scheme aims to move away from the current ad-hoc approach to biobanking in NSW, and towards a more organised, healthcare-integrated public asset. Based on a program successfully implemented in Canada, the objective of the NSW Biobank Certification Program is to improve and coordinate the standards of biobanking in NSW, through easy access to educational material and the promotion of best practices and procedures.

The primary objectives of the voluntary certification program are to:

- Promote adherence with best practices for biobanking, to achieve high and standardised quality across NSW biobanks
- Foster both public and researcher confidence in biobanks
- Facilitate the adoption of best practice standards
- Provide educational resources for new and existing biobanks and pathology laboratories engaged in biobanking activities
- As highlighted in the 2012 NSW Strategic Review of Health and Medical Research in Australia, there is a growing realisation of the need for increased investment in biobanking for NSW to develop into an innovative hub of quality research that responds and contributes to scientific advancements. Both the NSW and Federal Governments have committed to scale up infrastructure and support for biobanking. The opening of the NSW Statewide Biobank in November 2017 and implementation of the NSW Biobank Certification Program are recent examples of the investments being made in the field of biobanking.

The Kolling Institute Tumour Bank has welcomed the introduction of the NSW Biobank Certification Program and has registered for the scheme. As a team we have completed the mandatory education modules and submitted our procedural documents for review. These protocols have been evaluated by the Statewide Biobank Certification Officer to ensure that policies employed by the Kolling Institute Tumour Bank are in alignment with international biobanking best practices.

Providing educational materials for biobanks is a significant focus of the NSW Biobank Certification program. Based on a well-developed Canadian initiative, the NSW Health Pathology program has been tailored to reflect the laws, regulations and policies in Australia, and how these apply to research and the private and public health care landscape.

For more information on the NSW Biobank Certification Program visit: https://nsw.biobanking.org
Do you want to help us find a cure for cancer?

The University of Sydney’s Kolling Institute of Medical Research located at Royal North Shore Hospital needs you to join us in the fight against cancer.

To help find a cure, we are analysing blood samples from cancer patients and comparing them with those from healthy volunteers.

We are looking for healthy volunteers who:
- Have not had cancer
- Have not donated to our banks before
- Are over the age of 18 (no upper age limit)
- Have not been hospitalised in the last 6 months

If you are interested in participating please contact us on 9926 4771 to arrange a time.

Thank you

This project has been approved by the Northern Sydney Local Health District Human Research Ethics Committee Version 1. 3rd July 2014

CONTACT US

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Hours: 8:30am-5:00pm

Website: www.sydneyvital.org.au/biobank/

The Kolling Institute Tumour Bank relies solely on grants to build and maintain the collection of samples required to allow important medical research to continue. If you would like to make a donation to support the running of our tumour bank we would love to hear from you.

Please visit the Sydney Vital website and click on the ‘Make a Donation’ tab to complete our donation form.

www.sydneyvital.org.au/biobank