

## **Celebratory Launch of the McGill Global Oncology Program**

The Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology is committed to developing a thriving global oncology program within McGill to foster partnerships between our university and other institutions internationally, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, with the goal of enhancing collaborative initiatives in cancer research, teaching/training, service, and policymaking.

In mid-2020, after consultation with the direction of the new School of Population and Global Health at McGill, the Department established a Global Oncology Task Force under the leadership of **Dr. Tarek Hijal**, to start building the program. Task Force members included a broad range of cancer-related specialties including medical oncology, radiation oncology, surgical oncology, pediatric hematology-oncology, cancer genetics, cancer epidemiology, psychosocial oncology, and basic cancer research. As an additional step in establishing a formal global oncology footprint at McGill, the Global Oncology Task Force created the 3-credit graduate level course, Seminars in Global Oncology (ONCO 645), which began in January 2022. This course is incorporated in the Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology's Graduate Diploma in Oncology which includes population and global cancer control as one of the areas of focus.

As of January 1, 2022, the Task Force became a standing Program in the Department under the leadership of **Professor Argerie Tsimicalis**. A list of the Program members can be found at the following link: <https://www.mcgill.ca/oncology/interunit-programs/global-oncology-program>. As part of McGill Global Health Week (a McGill Bicentennial event), a Celebratory Launch of the Global Oncology Program was held on May 18, 2022, from 1:30 – 3:00 pm at the Faculty Club and was simultaneously broadcast on YouTube.

**Professor Eduardo Franco**, Chair of the Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology, gave the opening remarks, describing the history of the creation of the Global Oncology Program and its endeavours. **Professor Argerie Tsimicalis**, Program Director, continued with an overview of the program including its goals and membership, as well as the global partnerships and accomplishments of its members. **Dr. Antoine Loutfi**, a surgical oncologist, presented a talk entitled *Lessons learned from my experiences as a surgeon, health care planner and administrator*. Dr. Loutfi discussed his experience working in low- and middle-income countries and the challenges that were faced in delivering cancer care. In addition, he talked about the lessons learned in developing a cancer plan during his time as the Director of the Quebec Cancer

Program of the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux. **Professor Ivan Topisirovic** and **Professor Sonia del Rincon** presented their basic science projects which involve international collaborations. Their joint presentation was entitled *Towards elucidating the role of mRNA translation in cancer via global cooperation*. Professor Topisirovic's talk focused on the dysregulation of mRNA translation and energy metabolism in cancer, his work on gene expression and metabolome analysis and how this research was facilitated through collaborations with researchers in Sweden and Brazil. Professor del Rincon's presentation focused on her work on MNK1/2 expression and its effect on the tumour immune microenvironment. **Professor Zeev Rosberger**, whose research discipline is psychosocial oncology, presented *A novel integrated approach to the control of cervical cancer and female genital schistosomiasis in Sub-Saharan Africa*. He described his collaborative work with the non-governmental organization, HPV Global Action, researchers at NCI-US and the University of Oslo, as well as the Eswatini Government Ministry of Health to integrate screening and treatment of human papillomavirus and female genital schistosomiasis-related cervical lesions in Eswatini (formerly Swaziland). **Professor Franco** gave an overview of the Department's Graduate Diploma in Oncology and then presented in detail, Seminars in Global Oncology (ONCO 645) which he coordinates, and which was offered for the first time in the 2022 winter term. **Dr. Annie Leung**, a gynecologic oncologist, presented *Cervical Cancer Elimination: From Novel Biomarkers to Outreach and Education*. Dr. Leung discussed her research projects looking at new methods for screening for cervical cancer as well as her upcoming collaborative work to improve cervical cancer screening in Inuit women of Nunavik. **Dr. Ipshita Prakash** was unable to attend in person, but provided a pre-recorded video of her presentation, *The Global Breast Cancer Initiative*. Dr. Prakash explained that in low- and middle-income countries the incidence of breast cancer is lower compared to high income countries, but it is more often found at advanced stage of the disease and at younger age of diagnosis. There is a lack of diagnosis and treatment as well as barriers to access in low- and middle-income countries. The Global Breast Cancer Initiative aims to address these issues. The session ended with concluding remarks by **Dr. Charles Larson**, Interim Director of Global Health Programs at McGill, and then a celebratory champagne toast led by Dr. Franco.



## GOP: an acronym not at all like the one known elsewhere How did we get here?

- October 29, 2020: Creation of the Global Oncology Task Force tasked with the development and implementation of a vision for global oncology education, research, policy, and service.
- Dr Tarek Hijal appointed as inaugural Chair.
- Call for expressions of interest to join membership.
- Monthly meetings with guest candidate partners for MOUs.
- Membership increasing (N=26).
- ONCO 645 created in the Fall 2021.
- January 1, 2022: Task Force transformed into a permanent program in the department with links to other FMHS schools.



Professor Eduardo Franco presenting a history of the Global Oncology Program

## Membership Specialties

- Members come from a broad range of cancer-related specialties
  - medical oncology, radiation oncology, surgical oncology, pediatric hematology-oncology, cancer genetics, cancer epidemiology, psychosocial oncology, psychology, nursing, dentistry, and basic cancer research
- Our members are actively reaching out and inviting their colleagues, in cancer-related specialties from other countries, to discuss opportunities for collaboration
- Dedicated to supporting the development of more affordable, equitable and high-quality cancer care across many different systems and populations



Professor Argerie Tsimicalis presenting an overview of the Global Oncology Program

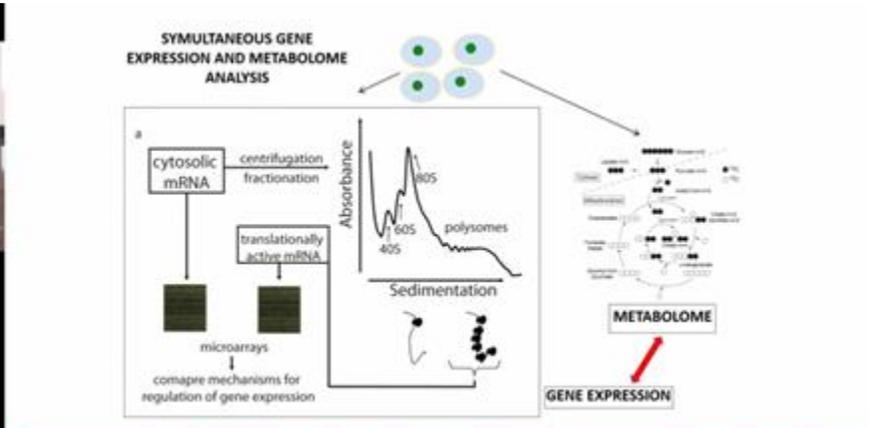


## Issues encountered in LMIC

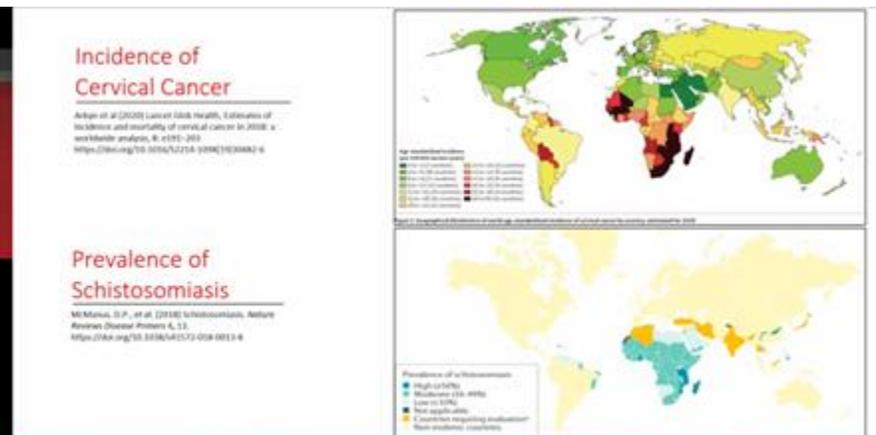
1. Cancer is **advanced** at the time of diagnosis
2. Little data existed on its distribution, prevalence and outcome
3. Lack of **care facilities** to properly diagnose and treat cancer: such as cancer centres, pathology laboratories, radiotherapy centres, and imaging facilities



Dr. Antoine Loutfi presenting issues in low- and middle-income countries regarding cancer care



Professors Ivan Topisirovic and Sonia del Rincon presenting basic science research projects involving global collaborations



Professor Zeev Rosberger presenting his global collaborative work on cervical cancer and schistosomiasis in Sub-Saharan Africa



## Graduate Diploma in Oncology

- Graduate Diploma in Oncology launched in the Fall of 2020. 3<sup>rd</sup> cohort beginning in September 2022.
- Four areas of focus: (i) Population and Global Cancer Control, (ii) Psychosocial Oncology/Palliative Care, (iii) Clinical Cancer Research, (iv) Cancer Care Services and Quality.
- One-year full-time completion; 2.5 years for PT students.
- Core course: Fundamentals of Oncology and Cancer Research (ONCO 610) (6 credits).
- Additional required courses: Best Practices in Biomedical Research (ONCO 620, 3 credits); Oncology Practicum (ONCO 630, 3 credits).
- Additional courses created: ONCO 611, ONCO 615, ONCO 625, ONCO 645
- 30 credits to be completed: 15 among required courses, 6 from one of the 4 areas of focus, 9 from a variety of other courses in the FMHS.
- Partnership with Department of Surgery: GradDip recipients can earn another 15 credits in EXSU towards an MSc-NT. Stackable certificate option forthcoming.



Professor Eduardo Franco presenting on the Graduate Diploma in Oncology and Seminars in Global Oncology (ONCO 645)

**Summary of Current Challenges**

- Accessibility
- Low specificity of HPV DNA testing
- Limited biomarker detection capabilities

**Our 2030 Goals**

- 90% of girls are fully vaccinated against cervical cancer at the age of 15
- 70% of women are screened for cervical cancer at the age of 35 and 45
- 90% of women with positive cervical screening receive treatment

Dr. Annie Leung presenting on the challenges of cervical cancer screening

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Age standardized (World) incidence and mortality rates, breast

Region	Incidence (ASR per 100,000)	Mortality (ASR per 100,000)
Australia and New Zealand	95.5	12.1
Western Europe	90.7	15.6
Northern America	89.4	12.5
Northern Europe	86.8	13.7
Southern Europe	79.6	13.3
Polynesia	71.2	22.3
Central and Eastern Europe	57.1	15.3
South America	56.4	14.0
Caribbean	50.9	18.9
Melanesia	50.5	27.5
Southern Africa	50.4	15.7
Northern Africa	49.6	18.8
World	47.8	13.6
Western Asia	46.6	16.0
Eastern Asia	43.3	9.8
Micronesia	41.7	16.2
Western Africa	41.5	22.3
South-Eastern Asia	41.2	15.0
Central America	39.5	10.4
Eastern Africa	33.0	17.9
Middle Africa	32.7	18.0
South-Central Asia	26.2	13.1

by 20 40 60 percent of the three million breast cancer cases and

Dr. Ipshita Prakash presenting on the Global Breast Cancer Initiative

Global Health Week  
Providing Solutions to Global Challenges

McGill

1821-2021  
MADE by McGill

Dr. Charles Larson giving the closing remarks