**SIOP PODC July 2018 Newsletter Contribution**

We are about to hold the third quarterly meeting of SIOP PODC in mid-August. Exciting news is that we will be joined by the Young Investigators for the first time. The YIs are building a LMIC presence and we look forward to working together. Meanwhile, all 11 Working Groups and 3 Task Forces are hard at work on both old and new projects. For more details see <http://siop-online.org/podc/> and if you have interest in any of our working groups, please contact the co-chairs of that working group or task force listed on the SIOP website.

Several important issues remain on the front burner:

[1] Membership: We are encouraging all PODC members to join SIOP. This is possible with reduced rates for LIC and LMIC members of only €20. Membership entitles one to access to the journal Pediatric Blood and Cancer, as well as reduced registration for the annual SIOP meeting. Julia Challinor has been helping us to map membership so that we can try and focus our recruitment efforts.

[2] Global Mapping of Services: SIOP President Eric Bouffet added his voice to the call for a global mapping of paediatric oncology services, and the **Education and Training Working Group** has taken up the challenge. A pilot survey will soon be launched in Africa in English, French and Portuguese. For more information please see their report below. <https://siop-online.org/global-mapping-of-paediatric-oncology-services/>

There are two new co-chairs. Federico Antillon has replaced Avram Denburg as co-chair of the **Essential Medicine Working Group**, and Nuria Rossell has replaced Ketan Kulkarni as co-chair of the **Abandonment of Treatment Working Group**. We thank Avi and Ketan for their huge contributions.

We are looking forward to an excellent programme in Kyoto. The best of the continents sessions will take a break until 2019, but we will have symposia by the **Adapted Therapy Regimen** and **Abandonment** **of Treatment Working Groups**, as well as **Twinning, Collaboration and Support** who will look at the *Effective Development of Shared Care Networks in LMIC*. In addition the St Jude team will host a symposium on *Pediatric Oncologic Emergency Management in LMIC*. It is worth noting that the topic for this year’s SIOP Advocacy Symposium is the Lancet Global Commission on Sustainable Pediatric Cancer Care.

There will be four PODC Free Paper Sessions, two in the main meeting and two on Education Day. The scientific committee will offer assistance to second language English speakers whose abstracts are chosen for oral presentation. In a related note the PODC co-chairs are very happy to try and find assistance and advice for PODC members planning to submit abstracts for the SIOP 2019 in Lyon.

Our annual business meeting takes place at the International Convention Centre in Kyoto from 13h00 to 16h00 on Thursday November the 15th. It’s an open meeting and it’s a unique opportunity for members to meet and interact with all the working group co-chairs. Please come along and join SIOP PODC and one of its Working Groups.

Next, we highlight one of our SIOP PODC Working Groups, the **Essential Medicines Working Group**.

Recent and ongoing WG activities include the following:

**Pediatric Oncology Roundtable to Transform Access to Global Essentials (PORTAGE)**

The PORTAGE initiative, a joint endeavour of SIOP, CCI and Friends of Cancer Patients (FOCP), was launched at an international meeting in the UAE in January, with the patronage of HRH Queen of Sharjah. The meeting built on the Essential Medicines Symposium held at the 2017 SIOP Congress in Washington DC. It brought together stakeholders from industry, global health governance institutions, civil society, and academia to identify tractable, scalable and sustainable solutions to current barriers to drug access, across domains of availability, accessibility, acceptability, affordability and quality. The meeting laid the groundwork for bilateral and multilateral partnerships to improve access to essential childhood cancer medicines. We anticipate further developments on this front in the coming months, and will keep PODC members apprised.

**Drug Quality and Pharmacovigilance**

WG members and collaborators continue to spearhead a number of activities focused on drug quality, spanning pharmacological studies to advocacy endeavours. A number of these have focused on asparaginase, with investigations into the provenance, production, procurement, and quality of different products in a range of health systems. Noteworthy examples include:

• Efforts led by Silvia Brandilese and colleagues at Boldrini’s Children Center in Brazil to assay a specific preparation of asparaginase used in the treatment of pediatric ALL in the country, following concerns related to its safety and efficacy. This work has been published in EBioMedicine and a related Op-Ed by Tim Eden in the Financial Times is forthcoming. A comparable product used in Haiti is also being assayed by the team at Boldrini Children’s.

• Work led by Vikram Prakash and colleagues at Tata Memorial Center in Mumbai to assay a range of asparaginase preparations on the market in India, with results to be presented at the upcoming SIOP Congress in Japan.

**Drug Access Studies**

As part of the PORTAGE initiative, and with support from SIOP leadership, members of our WG are conducting studies of childhood cancer drug access in a number of LMICs. Thus far, projects have been launched in the English-speaking Caribbean, Ghana, and in India, and are at varying stages of development, from design to data analysis to abstract publication.

• Ramandeep Arora and his team in New Delhi will be presenting their work on availability and price of antineoplastics in India at the SIOP Congress in Kyoto. They have also recently completed a study on out-of-pocket costs related to childhood cancer care in India, which demonstrated that medicines comprised a significant proportion of the cost burden borne by families.

• We anticipate expansion to additional sites in the short- to medium-term, with a goal of building an evidence base for policy and advocacy endeavours to improve drug access for children with cancer in LMICs.

**WHO Meeting on Cancer Drug Availability and Affordability**

In response to the 2017 WHA Resolution on Cancer, the WHO held an international advisory meeting to inform the development of a technical report on cancer drug availability and affordability. The unique realities and needs of children with cancer were voiced, and recommendations related to paediatric drug pricing, production, procurement, and reimbursement should form part of the ultimate report.

And last but by no means least there is a new EM WG Co-Chair! Federico Antillon has graciously accepted the role of EM WG co-chair alongside Parth. He will take over from Avi at this year’s SIOP Congress in November. We are very excited by the knowledge and energy he brings to this role, and know the WG is in excellent hands! We thank Avi for his excellent leadership and service to the WG and his ongoing commitment to moving the WG mission forward.

*The Essential Medicine WG is co-chaired by Parth Mehta from the United States and Federico Antillon from Guatemala.*

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Report submitted by PODC co-chairs Sandra Luna-Fineman and Alan Davidson.