

The Christie International Fellowship Programme Newsletter

Issue Two

Supported by

MANCHESTER CANCER RESEARCH CENTRE







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Engagement

For any enquiries about The Christie International Fellowship Programme or queries on how to apply please visit The Christie Interational Fellowships webpages.



the-christie.fellowships@nhs.net



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Welcome from Professor Peter Hoskin

Hello and welcome to the second edition of The Christie International Fellowship Programme's newsletter.

I am delighted to have taken up the role of Fellowship Lead within the Trust across the past 6 months to work on the growth and overall development of our fellowship portfolio as part of the wider Christie Education offering. I am a Clinical Oncologist with a focus on GU and cervical cancers, and currently split my work between The Christie, University of Manchester, and Mount Vernon Cancer Centre/UCLH in London. It is my pleasure to present some of the latest achievements from fellows across the trust, and celebrate all the activity happening within various disease teams in both a clinical and research capacity.

We are also very much looking forward to our first Christie fellows academic reception taking place at ESTRO 2023 this year in Vienna. It will be a fantastic opportunity for our radiation fellows, alumni and present, to network with colleagues at our major European meeting. I am also looking forward to working with the fellowships team on other opportunities within the next year for further events, in order to regularly bring together graduates, supervisors, and current fellows of the programme back together.



We remain keen to hear from you all to capture all the great work that is going on within fellowships across the Trust and are very grateful to those who have contributed to this edition. Please send all future submission suggestions to: <u>the-christie.fellowships@nhs.net</u>

If you are reading this as a potential candidate considering The Christie as the next step in your career, then I hope that this newsletter gives you some insight into what being a fellow is like and I encourage you to apply to our future opportunities!

The Christie International Fellowship Programme is overseen and managed by Professor Peter Hoskin (Fellowship Lead), Rachel Chown (Head of Academic Education), and Jenny Espin (Education Coordinator). The success of the Fellowship Programme is generously enabled through the support of our funders, including The Christie Charity.



Rachel Chown



Jenny Espin

The Christie International Fellowship Programme - At a Glance



~97,000

Over 97,000 chemotherapy treatments are delivered to patients each year. One of nine UK Centres to offer Advanced CAR-T therapies Mobile chemotherapy units provide treatment options at locations closer to





patients' homes.

~87,000

Extensive radiotherapy facilities providing over 87,000 treatments each year in fields including: MR-Linac, Proton Beam Therapy, SABR, Adaptive Radiotherapy.

The Christie is one of only two sites worldwide to offer such advanced radiotherapy treatments.

We are International

Current and past Christie Fellows have come from across the globe to undertake a fellowship at The Christie, covering over 43 countries.



1st

The Christie was the first UK member audited and accredited as a Comprehensive Cancer Centre by the Organisation of European Cancer Institutes.

The Christie is one of the most technologically advanced hospitals in the world





SPOTLIGHT ON... Dr Madeleine Strach, Honorary Clinical Research Fellow in Medical Oncology

Dr Madeleine Strach is a Medical Oncologist and European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) Translational Research Fellow from Sydney, Australia, who is working within The Christie Colorectal and Peritoneal Oncology Centre (CPOC) research group. Her research on appendix cancer aims to provide crucial biological insights into a relatively unexplored disease, presenting opportunities to identify new therapies and improve patient outcomes.

Madeleine completed her medical degree at The University of Melbourne, Australia, and trained as a specialist Medical Oncologist though the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. In 2018, she moved to Sydney to work as a Phase One Clinical Trial Fellow and subsequently as a consultant at the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. During her time in Sydney, she became interested in the unmet clinical needs of rare cancers and wanted to better understand the translational 'bench to bedside' aspects of cancer research.

In 2020, Madeleine commenced her PhD in appendix cancer. To explore additional translational research experience, Madeleine's supervisors in Australia began discussions with Mr Omer Aziz. Madeleine applied successfully for a prestigious ESMO on appendix cancer, with the aim of strengthening the collaboration between these two institutions.

Madeleine now conducts her research with the CPOC research group here in Manchester. Her research focus is on understanding the genetic profile of appendix cancer with the hope of finding targets of novel treatments to ultimately improve patient outcomes. Specifically, she will be evaluating the role of peri-operative chemotherapy, establishing predictors of clinical outcomes in patients with appendix cancer who undergo cytoreductive surgery.



Additionally, she will be focusing on comparing patient tumour genomics and clinical outcomes and characterising the tumour microenvironment of this cancer using novel 'multi-omics' approaches. Exploring the tumour microenvironment provides a greater understanding of tumour characteristics. Ultimately, this should help in finding novel treatments to improve patient outcomes.

"The best thing about translational research is the multidisciplinary team of scientists and clinicians working together, and the Manchester team have been incredibly welcoming"

As a rare cancer, appendix cancer requires better identification of prognostic and predictive biomarkers to increase understanding of how we can select patients for existing therapies and improve treatments. Madeleine hopes that through this collaboration here in Manchester, she can share her experience with her home institute to address unmet needs in rare cancers in Australia. "People who have rare cancers are often neglected in terms of research, and when you combine all the patients with rare cancers together into one group, they're actually not so rare."

Madeleine was drawn to Manchester by the great international profile of the MCRC and her professional networks with researchers here. The Christie is an OECI-accredited Comprehensive Cancer Centre and has certain dedicated services attached to it such as the peritonectomy unit that lend themselves to international collaborations.

"For me, Manchester is an ideal place to be for appendix cancer research and The Christie has an excellent international reputation for cancer research," Madeleine said. "The best thing about translational research is the multidisciplinary team of scientists and clinicians working together, and the Manchester team have been incredibly welcoming. I'm pleased to contribute to their ongoing work; I'm excited for this significant chapter in my research career."

The CPOC treats patients from the majority of Northern England and Wales, meaning there is a vast potential for research into these rare cancers.

Madeleine's background as a Medical Oncologist in early clinical trials has seen her interests evolve in 'bench to bedside' research and she is keen to continue work in understanding the preclinical aspects of cancers. Looking forward, she hopes to continue postdoctoral translational research work to improve outcomes for patients with rare cancers.



Fellow Profile Dr Michelle Li

What is your fellowship specialism and where were you based before joining The Christie?

I am one of the Clinical Fellows in Proton Therapy at The Christie. Prior to moving to the UK for this fellowship, I completed my radiation oncology training at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne, Australia.

What attracted you to The Christie?

The Christie is a world-renowned cancer centre, known for its patient-centred approach and outstanding research. At the time of applying for the position, The Christie was the only proton centre in the UK, and so this was the perfect place to learn more about proton therapy. I also contacted a couple of the previous fellows, and they spoke very highly of their fellowship experience at The Christie.

What have you enjoyed most about your fellowship?

I have enjoyed meeting and working with the fantastic team in proton therapy. I started the role with very limited knowledge in proton therapy and have learnt a great deal from the team here, especially from our wonderful fellowship supervisor Dr Shermaine Pan.

What has been your biggest achievement?

I was so excited to have the opportunity to present one of my research projects on 'Early outcomes after proton therapy for paediatric and TYA pelvic sarcomas' at ESTRO this year in Copenhagen, Denmark. I was also awarded the Particle Therapy Co-operative Group Travel Fellowship to attend the annual conference in Miami USA and present our comparison planning study on improving proton treatment for spinal sarcomas.



What do you plan to do next?

I plan to work as a consultant radiation oncologist back in Australia. I hope to continue collaborating with the team at The Christie and build on the research we have started.

What advice would you give to other Fellows to make the most of their time at The Christie?

Take this opportunity to venture out of your comfort zone - don't be afraid to ask questions and meet fellows from other teams. You'll find that everyone is keen to share their knowledge and skills, and all it takes is for you to show some interest. I have really enjoyed meeting people from all over the world and will treasure the friendships made during my time at The Christie.

Alumni Profile Dr Neal Ramchander, Clincial Fellow in Experimental Cancer Medicine

What is your fellowship specialism and where were you based before the Christie?

I work with the early phase clinical trials team. Prior to this, I completed foundation training down the road at Manchester Foundation Trust.

What attracted you to The Christie?

It has always been a dream of mine to work here. As a world-leading cancer centre it is just an extraordinary place to work. I had heard from colleagues that The Christie is a supportive and nurturing environment, with incredible research opportunities, and I was particularly attracted to an ECMT Fellowship because of the fully integrated research aspects of this job.

What have you enjoyed most about the fellowship?

Working in clinical trials, we are fortunate to get to know our patients well and this is a particularly rewarding aspect of the job. Every day brings new challenges, and I am constantly developing my clinical and research practice. I have seen first-hand how exciting a career in academic medicine can be here at The Christie. The team is incredibly supportive, and the Consultant body are the most approachable supervisors I have ever had the pleasure of working with.

What has been your biggest achievement?

Working on the CONNECT study led by Dr Donna Graham. This work was centred on the use of technology amongst patients enrolled in early-phase clinical trials during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic brought into sharp focus the benefits and risks of integrating technology into our practice, and we sought to capture this through this study. Trial's medicine is constantly changing, and technology continues to get embedded in their structure; it is critical that we listen to our patients when making these adaptations.



What do you plan to do next?

I start Internal Medicine Training in August. The experiences I have had here have been critical to my growth as both a researcher and a clinician. I would love to return to The Christie for Registrar training.

How has the fellowship supported your career plans/professional development?

I have learnt so much not only about clinical trials and how they are run, but also the importance of working collaboratively with a team. As a subinvestigator on trials, I work closely with the MDT to ensure our patients are managed safely, and to ensure the integrity of the studies is protected. I have been afforded amazing opportunities to work on my research interests and will hopefully present some of this work at upcoming conferences. I was also honoured to be invited to the ECMC JING Training the Next Generation course in May this year where I presented my early phase study proposal. The fellowship programme is run brilliantly, and we are lucky to have amazing teaching sessions from experts across medical and clinical oncology sub-specialties.

What advice would you give to other fellows to make the most of their time at The Christie?

The time goes by far too quickly! Set clear goals at the start and work towards them. Take advantage of the supportive environment here and ask for help – you are never too far away from a world-leading expert! The Peak District is less than an hour away, pencil some time in to get out into nature every now and then.

Alumni Profile Dr Rille Pihlak, Senior Clinical Fellow in Medical Oncology

Dr Rille Pihlak is from Estonia and was a clinical PhD Fellow in the HPB team from April 2016 to September 2019 and a Senior Research Fellow in the ECMT from October 2019 until March 2021.

Where were you based before joining The Christie?

Before coming to The Christie in April 2016, I had just finished oncology specialist training in my home country of Estonia. I first came to do a clinical research PhD Fellowship on Pancreatic cancer in the Hepatopancreatobiliary (HPB) Team (2016-2019) and later joined the Experimental Cancer Medicine Team (ECMT) as a Senior Research Fellow (2019-2021).

What attracted you to The Christie?

I originally applied for a clinical PhD at The Christie and never really thought that I would get it. I had heard about The Christie before, as it is a large cancer centre in Europe and the people there do a lot of important and ground-breaking clinical research. However, when I went through the PhD application process for the University of Manchester and The Christie, I couldn't believe that they actually wanted to give me the position. I had always loved working on gastrointestinal cancers back home and found pancreatic cancer really interesting and puzzling, so it was serendipitous that there was this call out for a clinical research PhD, as it was exactly what I wanted to do.

After the PhD Fellowship in the HPB team, I wanted to develop my knowledge and skills related to clinical trials, so I applied for a fellowship position in the ECMT. The team is well known for their exciting early phase clinical trials and translational research, and there were some enthusiastic people who I wanted to work with.



What did you enjoy most about your Fellowship?

Honestly, my favourite thing about both fellowships was the people that I met - I made so many friendships and collaborations that will last a lifetime. Over my 5 years of fellowships at The Christie, I met a lot of international fellows who have become good friends as well as so many amazing members of both teams who were extremely welcoming and helped me through some of the tougher parts.

However, from a work perspective, my favourite thing was being able to take part in all the research and trials at The Christie. I really learned a lot and there were so many great discussions that expanded my knowledge of cancer and its treatments. It was amazing to see research impacting patients directly, especially in the early phase trials team, and the willing, lovely patients who helped us do some really complex trials.

What was your Fellowship research project?

My PhD looked at various clinical aspects that could improve outcomes for patients with pancreatic cancer. I built and ran an observational RELEVANT study that assessed patient and physician perspectives on clinically meaningful outcomes in the treatment of advanced pancreatic cancers.

I also examined the role of hyperglycaemia and diabetes on the outcomes of patients with pancreatic cancer through a comprehensive patient database looking at over 5 years of patients treated at The Christie. The last part was a translational project assessing the feasibility of evaluating BRCAness in plasma and tumour samples from patients with advanced pancreatic adenocarcinoma.

What are you doing now?

I've just started as Consultant Medical Oncologist at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London, focusing on gastrointestinal cancers and cancers of unknown primary and aiming to help improve clinical research and trial activities in these areas.

What advice would you give to other Fellows to make the most of their time at The Christie?

Take part in sessions offered by The Christie and The Manchester Cancer Research Centre (we built these for you!).

Meet people and talk to them about what you are doing. If you are struggling, there are so many people around doing really interesting research, and there is always someone who can help and give advice.

Push yourself to know more: go to study days, conferences and meetings, allow yourself to get the absolute maximum out of your time at The Christie.

Also, as I helped to build parts of the fellowship programme, give feedback and talk to the team if you have some ideas about how to make it even better - this is always appreciated!

Lastly, have fun, enjoy it and socialise with the other fellows.

Hear more from Dr Rille Pihlak talk about her fellowship in this <u>YouTube video</u>



Alumni Achievement Dr Thilina Ruwanpura

Christie International funded Fellowship in Clinical Oncology and Education

Over the last five years, Christie International has helped to share clinical and technical expertise internationally, supporting the Trust's ambition and status as a world-leading cancer centre, and investing income earned into the Trust's clinical and education services. One such investment made from work undertaken in China and Nigeria was to fund a new International Clinical Research Fellow for one year, under the joint supervision of Clinical Oncology and the School of Oncology. Dr Thilina Ruwanpura was appointed to this role in December 2021 and is already making an impact in the work he has been doing.

"Joining The Christie is one of the best things to happen to me in my career."

Thilina has been involved in national and international projects to improve knowledge in oncology which include the development of an oncology glossary, and oncology education for nurses in low and middle-income African nations.

In addition, he is working on a collaborative project between The Christie and some radiotherapy colleagues in Uganda to improve their head and neck radiotherapy pathway. Thilina has co-authored the RCR imaging module for prostate cancer for clinical oncology trainees, which is soon to go live and is also working on a review article in collaboration with colleagues based in Canada and Sri Lanka on SABR in lung cancer. During his clinical sessions, Thilina works in different tumour sites with experts in the field of oncology. He has also been supporting the development of a Global Health Partnership Foundation in oncology for nurses and allied health professionals in Kenya and Uganda. This module of digital learning is being funded through income from international projects in Ireland and China.

Prior to working at The Christie, Thilina obtained his postgraduate degree in Clinical Oncology from the Post Graduate Institute of Medicine, University of Colombo in 2018. During his training in the UK, he successfully completed his FRCR examination in April 2021, following which he joined The Christie as a Clinical Research/Education Fellow. He says, "joining The Christie is one of the best things to happen to me in my career."



Recent Fellow Achievements

Dr Kyrillus Shohdy, Clinical Fellow with the Advanced Immune and Cell Therapies/Experimental Cancer Medicine Team, has been selected to receive a 2022 Conquer Cancer Merit Award. These awards recognize top research advancements by young scientists. The American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) recognised Kyrillus with a Merit Award for his top-ranked research that will be presented at ASCO GU22 on the utility of ctDNA in patients with urothelial cancer. Kyrillus is working with the Experimental Cancer Medicine Team (ECMT), delivering early phase trials to patients and conducting quality research.

Dr Madeleine Strach, Honorary Clinical Research Fellow in Medical Oncology, presented at the Surgery Trainee Prize Presentation Evening in March 2022. She presented on outcomes of patients with appendix adenocarcinoma, a retrospective analysis of 216 patients treated through The Christie. Dr James Churchill also presented at the evening.

Dr Durga Harika Kannikanti, Clinical Fellow in Proton Therapy, had an abstract accepted for an e-poster at ESTRO 2022. The title is 'Protons in posterior fossa ependymoma - a dosimetric comparison with photons.' This study was designed to compare the dosimetry of proton with photon radiotherapy plans in patients with posterior fossa ependymoma in order to understand the potential for reduced late effects. Durga Harika also successfully passed all FCRC exams.





Dr Sri Harsha Kombathula, Clinical Fellow in Radiology, had an abstract accepted for ESTRO 2022. It was a retrospective study looking into "Prognostic factors in patients receiving palliative radiotherapy for female genital tract cancer." He has also co-authored a review article exploring the role of radiotherapy in non-muscle invasive bladder cancer. He is also working on an audit of practices in management of bladder cancers during the COVID 19 pandemic. Sri Harsha has passed his FRCR in September 2021 and is now a Fellow of the college.

Dr Simon Gray, HPB/NET Clinical Research Fellow, has had a review published in the journal 'Cancers'. The review is titled, 'Targeted Therapies for Perihilar Cholangiocarcinoma'. Following the end of his Fellowship at The Christie, Simon will be taking up a 3-year Academic Clinical Fellowship at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre.

Read their review:

Gray, S.; Lamarca, A.; Edeline, J.; Klümpen, H.-J.; Hubner, R.A.; McNamara, M.G.; Valle, J.W. Targeted Therapies for Perihilar Cholangiocarcinoma. *Cancers* **2022**, 14, 1789. <u>https://doi.org/10.3390/cancers14071789</u>

Dr Sam Rack, Clinical Research Fellow in Medical Oncology, has had a paper published in the journal 'Cancers'. The paper is, 'Evaluation of the Clinical Utility of Genomic Profiling to Inform Selection of Clinical Trial Therapy in Salivary Gland Cancer.' He has also had an abstract accepted for ASCO in June 2022.

Read the article here:

Rack, S.; Feeney, L.; Hapuarachi, B.; Adderley, H.; Woodhouse, L.; Betts, G.; Burghel, G.J.; Harrington, K.J.; Metcalf, R. Evaluation of the Clinical Utility of Genomic Profiling to Inform Selection of Clinical Trial Therapy in Salivary Gland Cancer. *Cancers* **2022**, 14, 1133. <u>https://doi.org/10.3390/cancers14051133</u>







Dr Mayank Mathur, Clinical Fellow in Surgery, was selected for Basic Robotic Surgical Skill Course on 3rd October 2021 at The Griffin Institute in London. He presented 2 posters in BAPIO (Silver Jubilee Conference) at Edgbaston. In November 2021 Mayank passed ALSGBI Lap Pass in NW ALSGBI LapPass course. He also had the opportunity to discuss Anastomotic failure following Robotic low anterior resection in an IAGES - ALSGBI Intercontinental Webinar. In December 2021 at ALSGBI (2021 Annual Scientific Meeting) he was selected to give oral presentation on 'Single institute experience of robotic vs laparoscopic vs open approach to abdominoperineal excision of rectum and anus'.

He also presented a poster at this conference. Recently a case report he has co-authored has been accepted for publication in Annals Royal College Surgery England. The report is titled, 'It's just a mucocele: a case report of a massive appendiceal mucocele presenting as a left upper Q1 quadrant mass'.



Dr Ertan Teodorescu-Arghezi, Undergraduate Education Fellow, has had a paper published in The Cureus Journal of Medical Science. The title of the paper is 'Major Haemorrhage Following a Transjugular Liver Biopsy: A Case Report and a Discussion of Complications and Learning Points'.

Read the article here:

Teodorescu-Arghezi E, Mullan D. Major Haemorrhage Following a Transjugular Liver Biopsy: A Case Report and a Discussion of Complications and Learning Points. *Cureus*. **2022** Nov 15;14(11):e31533. doi: <u>10.7759/cureus.31533</u>. PMID: 36540435; PMCID: PMC9754727.

If you have presented a poster or delivered a talk at a conference, had an academic paper published, been on a skills development course or won any awards and want to spotlight it in the next issue of the Newsletter, please contact: <u>the-christie.fellowships@nhs.net</u>

Fellow Representatives

We have a team of four fellow representatives who meet with the fellowship team regularly to provide feedback and discuss developments to the programme. They also sit on The Christie International Fellowship Board, advocating for their peers, shaping the fellowship teaching programme and organising regular social activities for fellows to meet and catch up with one another.



Dr Tess Gillham



Dr Mayank Mathur

We include a few words from Mayank below.



Dr Emily Heathcote



Dr Brian Moloney

"I am glad to join the fabulous team who have been looking after the Fellows. I joined The Christie last year in March and since then have attended fellows' dinners which were organised by the team. I joined at the time of lockdown and came directly from India.

I did my Medical Education and Surgical Training at ERAs Lucknow Medical College and Hospital in India. I was involved in various activities (cultural and sports events) during my Medical School and Surgical training and always try to make the workspace friendly. Hopefully I will be of some help to the fellowship team in organising some social events and the teaching programme with the help of the School of Oncology."

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Cathryn Crockett, Dr Roseanna Wheatley and Dr Michelle Li for all of their prior work as fellow representatives and wish them all the best in their future careers.



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Apply by 22nd May 2023 for a 10% fee reduction

Upcoming Events

Fellows are invited to fortnightly teaching sessions, facilitated by a range of subject experts. Invites to these events are shared directly with all fellows with instructions on how to get involved.

Date	Subject	Speaker
Friday 31st March 2023	Immunotherapy: Efficacy and Toxicity	Dr Angelos Angelakas
Monday 17th April 2023	Leadership and Time Management	Prof. Judy Williams and Dr Nicholas Weise
Friday 28th April 2023	Molecular Genomics and Interpretation of Results	Dr Matthew Krebs
Friday 5th May 2023	Radiotherapy and IO combinations	Dr Sapna Lunj
Friday 19th May 2023	Educational Research Opportunities (session rescheduled)	Dr Ganesh Radhakrishna
Friday 26th May 2023	Surgical Management of Metastatic Testicular Cancer	Mr Aziz Gulamhusein
Monday 5th June 2023	Early phase clinical trial design	Dr Natalie Cook
Friday 23rd June 2023	Classification and management of appendiceal tumours (session rescheduled)	Mr Jonathan Wild

Further teaching events will resume in Autumn 2023 following a Summer break



Engagement

For any enquiries about The Christie International Fellowship Programme or queries on how to apply please visit The Christie Interational Fellowships webpages.



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https://www.christie.nhs.uk/education

https://www.christie.nhs.uk/internationalfellowship



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