

GLOBAL VILLAGE ONCOLOGY NETWORK (GVON) – AN EMERGING PLATFORM FROM AN EMERGING COUNTRY-AN INTERNATIONAL WORKING INITIATIVE

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Global networking for academic synchronization and progress is part of quality improvement in healthcare. Our group comprising of cancer care specialists came forward with a plan of establishment of a professional s forum which we have named as global village oncology network. **AIMS & OBJECTIVES:** The aim is to establish an international platform of cancer professionals with the purpose to participate and collaborate in "knowledge sharing" in academics, research, training & other professional forefronts with the goal of sharing best practice in given available resources for the improvement of cancer care of patients . **MATERIAL AND METHOD:** A website was launched on January 3, 2023, highlighting the network's vision, mission, values and goals with the title of global village oncology network (GVON), inviting people to join multidisciplinary & site-specific groups termed Pods. The data was collected over a 30 days period via GVON website. All variables were analyzed via computation in Excel sheet, all frequency data was calculated and documented. **RESULT:** In the first 4 weeks, 17 Pods were created with 884 website visits registered. Twenty-three Institutions inside and outside Pakistan were connected during this period. Focusing on over 11 disciplines including medical oncology, radiation oncology, surgical oncology, hematology and allied health professions. **CONCLUSION:** Such global academic initiatives can yield better outcomes in terms of improvement of overall multidisciplinary management of patients. GVON can play a pivotal role in this regard via strategic planning for better holistic comprehensive cancer care services and education.

Introduction

The world has transformed into a global village. International boundaries are becoming a mere description of geography. International networking and collaboration have seen unprecedented leaps in the past few decades that have contributed to a massive increase of information, technology and

telecommunications. Similarly, cancer care across the globe is witnessing growth beyond borders. At the GVON, we are specifically interested in mitigating the problems caused by the rising cancer incidence and subsequent mortality in underserved patients in resource-limited settings in Pakistan and other low

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and middle-income countries (LMICs).¹ Due to the current situation of cancer services in Pakistan and other LMICs, patients, their families and professionals would benefit from international expertise and collaboration.² Working together, we can identify gaps, whether in education, research, mentoring, technology, and/or manpower and form a plan to address those in a systematic fashion. Oncology is a unique speciality and hence would benefit from the collaboration of professionals to meet common goals.³ Pakistani cancer caregivers working overseas, similar to their counterparts in Pakistan, have a huge interest in alleviating the suffering of cancer patients in Pakistan. They have been participating through various social media platforms and networks while achieving the common goal. Working abroad allows individual oncologists and allied faculty to work at leading centres, and centres of excellence with leaders in the field. By establishing the Global Network, we aim to establish collaborations and an international professional network with our oncology peers abroad so that they can channel their support for the benefit of cancer patients in Pakistan and other LMICs.^{4,5} The aim is to establish an international platform of cancer professionals with the aim to participate and collaborate in "knowledge sharing" in academics, research training & other professional forefronts with the goal of sharing best practices given limited resources for the improvement of cancer care of patients and their families in an emerging economy - Pakistan.

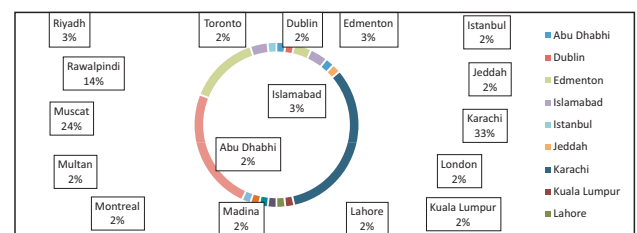
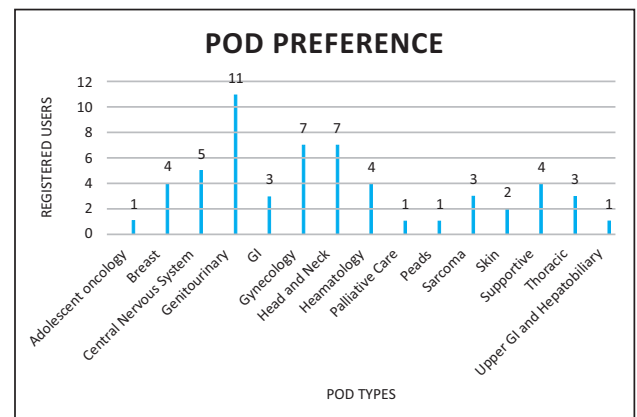
Material & Methods

A nidus of experts in the field of oncology through networking and questionnaires identified common gaps that need to be addressed in clinical practice, administrative/ leadership skills, research and teaching. A website was launched on January 3, 2023, highlighting the network's vision, mission, values and goals with the title of Global Village Oncology Network (GVON), inviting people to join multidisciplinary & site-specific groups termed PODs. Social media platforms were also utilized for this purpose. The data was collected over a 30 days period via GVON website with the help of a registration available of the website that included the name of the registered member,

email address, designation with institution name, their expertise and their preference to join a site-specific group termed as POD. All the variables were analyzed via Microsoft Excel to calculate frequencies.

Results

In the first 4 weeks, 17 PODs were created and 58 people joined. 884 website visits were registered and 23 Institutions inside and outside Pakistan were connected during this period. A total of 17 regions from around the world registered. The PODs successfully collected 11 disciplines that included 5 surgical oncologists, 23 radiation oncologists, 9 clinical oncologists, 9 medical oncologists, 3 hematologists and 10 from other allied professions. In addition, 2 existing bodies merged into the GVON platform, the first is the tumor board establishment facilitation forum (TEFF) with 3 multidisciplinary tumor board forums (head & neck, breast & gynae), and the other body club of young Pakistani radiation oncologists (CYPRO) with multiple online learning objectives based academic teaching activities. Two new groups were initiated with the name of GVON Metacampus and Imaging in oncology .



Discussion

Cancer care requires collaboration among various healthcare professionals, organizations, and resources. An ecosystem approach fosters effective teamwork and communication, enabling these experts to collaborate, share knowledge, and develop personalized treatment plans. This multidisciplinary approach leads to improved patient outcomes.⁶

Tumor board establishment facilitation forum (TEFF) is a student-run organization, under the mentorship of experienced doctors, working to assist in the establishment and quality enhancement of multidisciplinary site-specific tumor boards in Civil hospital, Karachi.⁷ Since our inception, we have successfully established and conducted tumor board meetings catering to the breast cancer, head & neck cancer, and gynecological cancer unit in Civil hospital in the past year.

Online networking breaks down geographical barriers, allowing healthcare professionals, researchers, and patients from around the globe to connect and share knowledge.⁸ Club for young Pakistani radiation oncologists (CYPRO) was founded with the primary goal of national synchronization of radiation oncology learning across the country via collaboration with international site-specific experts. Multiple learning objective-based learning sessions have been conducted to integrate the understanding of core concepts of quality radiation therapy practice.

Incorporating virtual networking creates opportunities for professionals to network and connect with colleagues from other disciplines.⁹ GVON Meta campus will allow you to understand new challenges and updates, to explore and learn practice-changing research updates and practices around the globe. Our aim is to focus on a student-centered approach for everyone. Experience the upcoming network of world leads that will bring thought-provoking viewpoints to improve patient care in oncology. Connect with us through our site-specific PODS and let's give back to your communities without boundaries.

Healthcare leadership in today's era revolves around the ability to navigate the complex healthcare system, make informed decisions, collaborate with other healthcare professionals and lead by example.¹⁰ GVON aims to introduce a three-tier leadership program, specially designed after taking into consideration

the required attributes being incorporated in the curriculum worldwide for young oncologists and residents and allied staff to enhance their interpersonal, intrapersonal and core leadership skills, with an important emphasis on communication skills, problem-solving skills, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, strategic visioning, and entrepreneurial mindset in health care.¹¹

Imaging in oncology is another platform that will provide an opportunity to all learners to review case-based images with a collated data base supported by experts in radiology ultimately translating into improved patient care.¹²

Conclusion

GVON has established a multidisciplinary platform that is bridging a connection between healthcare providers in Pakistan and those outside Pakistan focusing on academics, research, and training that will improve patient care within Pakistan via collaboration.

Conflict of Interest: None

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