

**Name:** Dr Rebekah Laidsaar-Powell

**Position & Affiliation:** Cancer Institute NSW Early Career Fellow, School of Psychology, University of Sydney

**Full Reference:**

#### **Invited Oral Presentation**

**Rebekah Laidsaar-Powell.** *Recognising and supporting carers experiencing distress: The urgent need for tailored psychosocial support for cancer carers*

#### **Poster Presentations**

**Rebekah Laidsaar-Powell,** Sarah Giunta, Phyllis Butow, Sandra Turner, Dan Costa, Christobel Saunders, Bogda Koczwara, Judy Kay, Michael Jefford, Penelope Schofield, Frances Boyle, Patsy Yates, Kate White, Annie Miller, Ilona Juraskova. *Improving carer engagement in cancer care: Mixed methods evaluation of the eTRIO educational module among oncology health professionals*

**Rebekah Laidsaar-Powell,** Sarah Giunta, Iona Gurney, Claire Hudson, Lisa Beatty, Joanne Shaw *Co-design of an online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (iCBT) intervention for cancer carers with anxiety or depression: Development of CarersCanADAPT*

**Conference/Meeting Name:** Psycho Oncology Co-Operative Group (PoCoG) ASM, Clinical Oncology Society Australia (COSA) ASM

**Location:** Melbourne, VIC, Australia

**Dates:** 31<sup>st</sup> October – 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2023

**Presentation Type:** Invited Oral Presentation, Poster Presentations



With the support of a Sydney Cancer Partners Conference Support Grant, I was able to attend two key oncology meetings of crucial relevance to my work.

**The first conference I attended was the PoCoG ASM**, which was a one day conference dedicated to psycho-oncology research and practice. The day was hugely valuable, with highlights including the first session which saw presenters from Community Organisations such as the Leukaemia Foundation, Ovarian Cancer Australia, and Sock It To Sarcoma present on the collaboration opportunities and synergies between research and community organisations. A personal highlight was giving an invited talk in a session on tailoring psychological support to people affected by cancer alongside two research mentors of mine, A/Prof Lisa Beatty and Prof Jill Newby. Both Lisa and Jill are leading academics in the field of online cognitive behavioural therapy interventions for people with anxiety and depression, which is the area of my Cancer Institute NSW Fellowship which I commenced this year. It was a pleasure to be able to network with academics who are so skilled and experienced in this exciting field. We had productive conversations about the tailoring of psychosocial interventions is warranted (vs general models of care). I was able to present on the urgent need for interventions to be tailored to the unique needs of family carers – as currently most interventions delivered to carers were originally designed for patients and have not been adequately adapted.

**The second conference I attended was the COSA ASM.** It was an exciting and well curated program with many supportive care, psychosocial, and health services sessions which I was able to attend. Some highlights were the plenary on Geriatric Oncology, and the insights from a geriatrician, medical oncologist, and nurse. I reflected after this session about the crucial role of the family carer in the geriatric oncology setting, which was highlighted by a question from a person in the audience who was the carer to an older family member.

The lunchtime poster viewing sessions were busy, and I was able to discuss my research with existing as well as many newly found colleagues and potential collaborators.

Over the course of the COSA conference there were sessions on designing and evaluating online interventions, which is a key research interest of mine. It was beneficial to hear about emerging methodologies and approaches which I am currently exploring in the context of my own upcoming RCT of an online intervention. There were some very insightful and practical takeaways in the session *Successes and challenges of embedding digital health programs for people living with cancer in diverse healthcare settings* chaired by Ursula Sansom-Daly and Christina Signorelli – particularly relating to project management, recruitment, and clinical implementation of online interventions. For example, there was very insightful discussion about best avenues to recruit people with cancer for online interventions across Facebook, GP clinics, pharmacy advertising which I will apply to my own recruitment strategies.

This was also one of the first national conferences I have been able to attend since the beginning of COVID, and it was wonderful to reconnect in person with many colleagues from across Australia. I was able to meet people that I have been virtually collaborating with for years, and it was special to be able to have conversations in person. I was able to attend breakfasts and dinners with colleagues, and I left the conference with strengthened collaborations and concrete plans for future research.

I am immensely grateful to Sydney Cancer Partners and the Cancer Institute NSW for their support of me attending these conferences.