

Name: Samuel Stevens

Position & Affiliation: PhD Candidate and Clinical Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney; Medical Oncologist, Concord Repatriation General Hospital

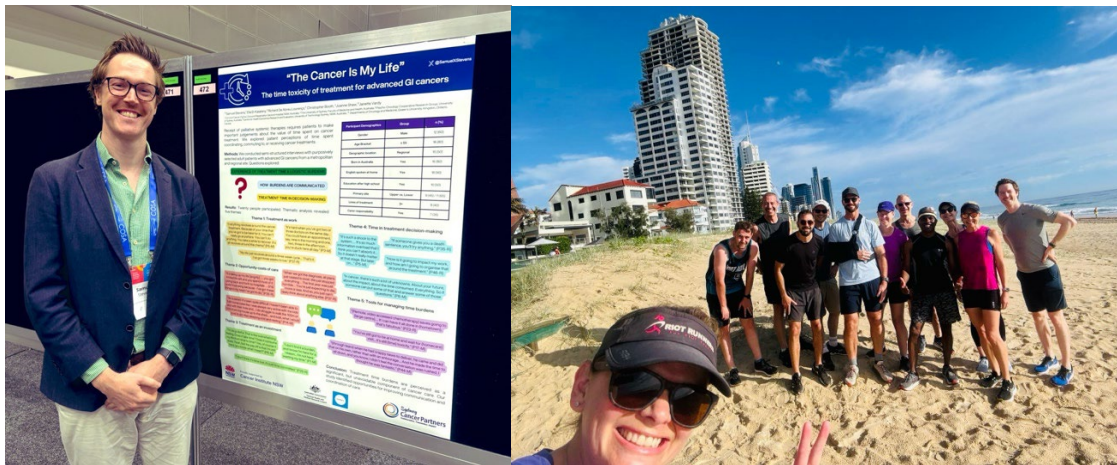
Full Reference: Stevens SX, El-Katateny E, De Abreu Lourenço R, Booth CM, Shaw J, Vardy J. *"The Cancer is My Life": Patient Perspectives of the Time Toxicity of Treatment for Advanced GI Cancers.*

Conference/Meeting Name: Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA) Annual Scientific Meeting

Location: Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia

Dates: 13-15 November 2024

Presentation Type: Poster



Left: Me with our work describing the time burdens of care for people with advanced cancer
Right: Practising what we preach: the COSA runners at Broad Beach, QLD

It was my pleasure to present our research at COSA's 51st Annual Scientific Meeting on 13-15th November 2024. I am an early career oncologist who is principally interested in the value of cancer care to patients and society. My current research focus is the time burdens of palliative therapies for advanced cancer, where time is limited and significant portions of survival time are often dedicated to receiving, commuting to, and coordinating cancer care, otherwise known as the "Time Toxicity" of cancer treatments. I presented our poster: *"The Cancer is My Life": Patient Perspectives of the Time Toxicity of Treatment for Advanced GI Cancers* at the 2024 COSA ASM. Our work is one of the first foundational qualitative analyses of time toxicity from the perspective of people living with advanced cancer, and the first exploring the experiences metropolitan and regionally-situated Australians.

The beautiful Gold Coast was the perfect location for over 1000 cancer clinicians from all disciplines to gather around the theme: *Bridging gaps, building progress, breaking down disparities*. There was a palpable eagerness to address global and local issues in accessing healthcare, highlighted beautifully by keynote speakers Dr. Danielle Rodin (Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, Canada) and Dr. Robin Zon (ASCO President, USA) from the very first plenary session. A host of formidable local researchers including Prof Gail Garvey AM (The University of Queensland) and A/Prof Mei Ling Yap added their expertise to the broad ranging discussions, which described inequities whilst buoying delegates with optimism about solutions to some of these challenging problems.

Notable sessions included those covering quality of life, poor prognosis cancers, patient-reported outcomes, and implementation sciences, all with significant relevance for our group's work on

mapping, measuring, and modifying sources of time burdens in cancer care. As somebody with an interest in the value of cancer care, these themes had high relevance for the sort of work that I hope to contribute over the course of my research career. Particular highlights was listening to Dr. Michael Krasovitsky (St. Vincent's Hospital) describe older people with cancers' conceptions of quality of life and mapping values to treatment approaches; A/Prof Joanne Shaw (The University of Sydney) describe the concept of 'Fear of Cancer Progression' in people with advanced cancers; and Dr. Julia Lai-Kwon (Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre) describe her PhD work in collecting Patient Reported Outcome Measures from people receiving immunotherapy at her centre.

The multidisciplinary nature of COSA makes it a very special conference, with room to explore more ethereal or heady concepts pertaining to cancer care. A personal highlight for me was the inclusion of a session reflecting on the role of Art in Oncology (hosted by Dr. Harry Gasper, Sunshine Coast University Hospital). There were few dry eyes in the house as clinician and lay artists reflected on the role of art as a media for self-expression, retaking agency in the face of overwhelming challenges, processing complex emotions, and creating a legacy. As an amateur pianist and writer it was incredibly affirming to be able to share these reflections with colleagues in a professional setting. Other personal highlights included Prof Darren Saunder's Presidential Lecture describing a life in science and research, and of course the annual COSA running group – which, in the spirit of equity left no delegate behind (not least the author) in taking full advantage of the Gold Coast's magnificent environs and flat terrain.

The 2024 COSA ASM was a breath of fresh air after what has personally been an enormous first year as a full-time researcher. COSA absolutely delivered on it's key theme of Equity, Access and Diversity, with a perfect blend of high quality scientific content, inspiration and re-invigorating meetings with colleagues. It was a privilege to be able to attend and share our work, with many thanks to Sydney Cancer Partners for supporting our work, and the work of so many other researchers who work tirelessly to create meaningful change for people affected by cancer.