

Newsletter of the Australasian Biospecimen Network Association

PRESIDENT: Cassandra Griffin

TREASURER: Helen Tsimiklis, Leanne Wallace

VICE PRESIDENT: Georget Reaiche

SECRETARY: Ussha Pillai

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Nina D'Vaz, Anusha Hettiaratchi, Samantha Higgins, Valerie Jakrot, Catherine Kennedy, Louise Ludlow, Wayne Ng, Shirley Wee, Li Zhou

ABNA ACCREDITATION SEMINAR SERIES

In 2022 ABNA is delighted to be kicking off our inaugural annual seminar series. Following on from the highly engaging INXS fuelled presentation given by NATA's Simon Lake at our 2021 conference, ABNA recognises the need to provide further information and support to our members who may be considering undertaking the accreditation process.

This seminar series will include four sessions, three in a virtual setting and a final workshop to be held at our annual meeting in October. There will be a single minimal fee to cover all three virtual sessions with the final workshop incorporated into conference registration. The final workshop is as yet untitled and our goal is to develop this collaboratively with our attendees to ensure maximum benefit. The Seminar Series kicks off next month with registrations now open! Click [HERE](#) to visit the website.

Seminar 1: Why Work Towards Accreditation?

Clare Allocca, senior advisor for Standardisation in the Standards Coordination Office of the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) will introduce the standard and provide an overview of applications, for both new and established biobanks. We will then hear from Dr Lara Mouttham from the Cornell Veterinary Bank and her experience of the accreditation process, focusing on motivations for doing so and impact.



Accreditation Seminar Series

Virtual Events

Seminar 1: 20 April 2022

Seminar 2: 22 June 2022

Seminar 3: 24 August 2022

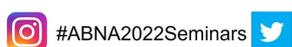
In-Person Event

Seminar 4: ABNA Conference
Workshop 19 October 2022

Seminars 1-3: \$30 member
(\$50 non-member)

Seminar 4: Included in conference
registration

Website: Click [HERE](#)



Seminar 2: Experiences of the Accreditation Process

Our second session will see presentations from Biobanking Victoria with Director Professor Melissa Southey, Quality Manager Vivien Vasic and Biorepository Manager Helen Tsimiklis sharing their experiences as the first Australian biobank to undertake the accreditation process.

Seminar 3: Certification or Accreditation

Our final virtual seminar will compare the Certification process facilitated by the NSW Statewide Biobank and the Accreditation process facilitated by NATA. With presentations from Professor Jennifer Byrne, Director of Biobanking with NSW Pathology and NATA's Gillian Treloar will provide an opportunity to explore both opportunities and identify individual merits of both.

Workshop: A collaboratively developed program

Embedded in our 2022 conference program, the workshop will address questions and themes raised during the virtual sessions. We encourage attendees to engage as much as possible during virtual seminars to ensure this session has maximal value for attendees.

5 MINUTES WITH CLARE ALLOCCA & DR LARA MOUTTHAM

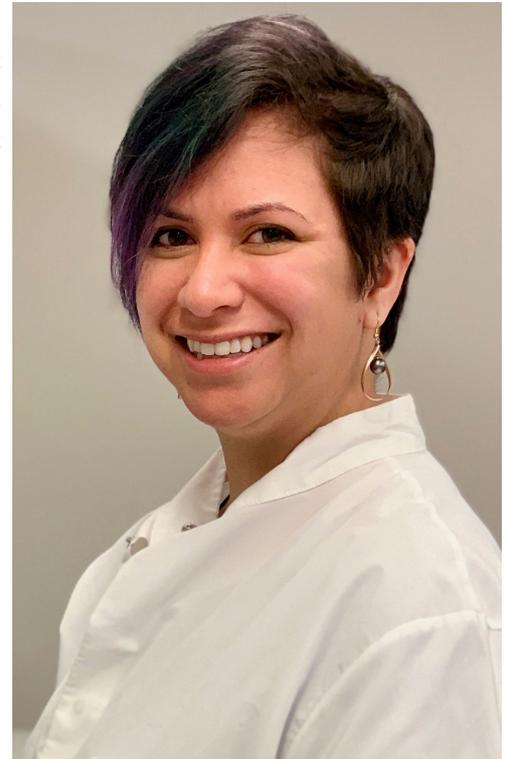
We approach different professionals in the biobanking arena with the same five questions each month, this edition we have the speakers from ABNA's Accreditation Seminar 1



CLARE ALLOCCA
Senior Advisor for
Standardisation, National
Institute of Standards &
Technology, US.

DR LARA MOUTTHAM

Assistant Director of Biobank
Laboratory Services,
Cornell Veterinary Biobank



CLARE

Tea
Cats
Yes
Star Trek

QUICK QUESTIONS

Tea or Coffee?
Cats or Dogs?
Coriander - Y/N?
Star Trek or Star Wars?

LARA

Tea
Cats
Yes
Star Wars

How long have you been working in biobanking?

8 years (depending on your definition of biobanking!)

8 years

Three words that best describe your biobanking career?

Fit-for-purpose, standardized, convergent

Unexpected, rocketing, rewarding

What has been the biggest biobanking challenge you have faced in your career so far?

I am not a typical biobanker, in that I do not work in a biobank. Rather, in my role I have been working in standardization for biobanking, and many marvellous biobankers have "adopted" me to assure my biobanking education over the years. In exchange, I have tried to provide education in the development and implementation of standards, conformity assessment and other tools to maximize fitness for purpose in biobanking institutions. That education (in both directions), and its application to biobanking, has certainly been the biggest challenge I have observed among my colleagues.

Becoming the first biobank in the world to obtain accreditation to ISO 20387:2018. We were able to accomplish this by having complete support from our leadership, which was a result of us educating them on the necessity and benefits of this undertaking.

What are you excited about that is happening in your biobank/what is your biobank doing that is new and innovative?

While I don't technically work in a biobank, I am very excited to see the uptake of ISO 20387, CAP, CTRNet, Best Practices, and other tools in biobanks all over the world. I believe these tools and resources are an opportunity to support biobanks in playing an even greater role in the biotechnological and biomedical arenas. They also provide language to enable biobanks to more easily work together, and biobank users to better understand the capabilities that biobanks can bring to the table. I hope to see more convergence between the worlds of biobanks and users to jointly enable the best biological materials and associated data for the best products in the marketplace!

We are the biobank for the Dog Aging Project, a large-scale longitudinal study of aging in domestic dogs as models of human aging. This is a new and challenging aspect of biobanking, and we are very excited to be a part of it.

The website for this project is: dogagingproject.org

What is your one wish as a biobanker?

Besides world peace, I wish to see biobanking experience even greater appreciation in biotechnology/biomedicine, with a resultant greater and earlier role in product development.

That researchers and clinicians truly understood what it is that biobanks do and utilised us to our full potential.

FIRST AUSTRALIAN BIOBANKER ACHIEVES QBRS

The International Society for Biological and Environmental Repositories (ISBER) would like to congratulate Karena Pryce of the Garvan Institute of Medical Research, NSW for being the first Australian biobanker to achieve a Qualification in Biorepository Science (QBRS).

The QBRS credential is a visible recognition of a candidate's skills in biobanking. "The new QBRS designation for successful applicants not only helps in delineating an appropriate level of skill and proficiency for biobankers, but also further advances ISBER's efforts to improve quality in biobanking worldwide," said Brent Schacter, Chair of the ISBER QBRS Steering Committee.

For more information, please visit: www.isber.org/qualification.

ABNA JOINS ISBER IN CONGRATULATING KARENA!



QUALIFICATION in BIOREPOSITORY SCIENCE
a partnership between ISBER and ASCP



NEW ROUTES AVAILABLE
Wondering if you can apply? Visit isber.org/qualification for details!

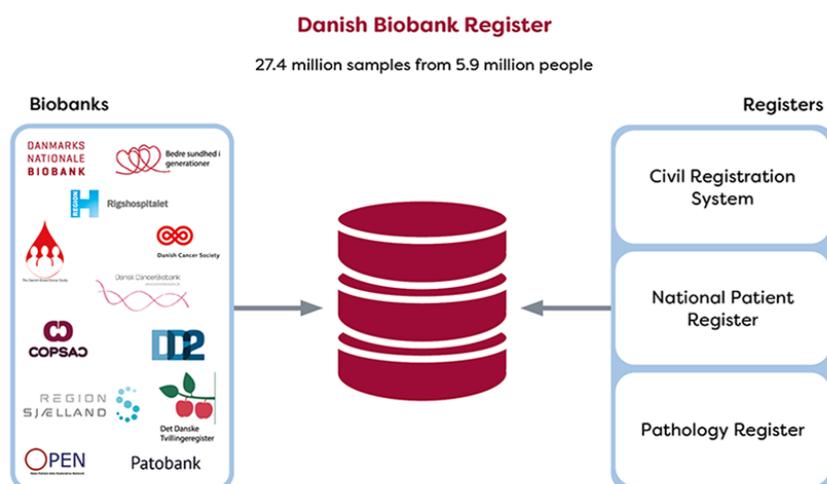
DANISH NATIONAL BIOBANK

Anusha Hettiaratchi

Denmark has given the world many things: Vikings, hygge, Lego and an architect who in turn gave Sydney its iconic opera house, among them. But did you know that Denmark is also leading the way with the Danish National Biobank (DNB) which is set to become one of the world's largest biobanks and a unique resource for Danish biomedical research?

The aim of establishing the DNB was to take advantage of the great potential of the many biological specimens collected by the Danish public health sector. Researchers are able to get a unique overview of, and access to, more than 20 million biological specimens in existing facilities as well as future collections. Projects approved by the Scientific Ethics Committee and the Danish Data Protection Agency can obtain permission to link biological material from one individual with information to be found in the national registers.

The Danish Biobank Register, run by the DNB, has an online tool that gives an overview of aggregated results where the available biological material can be searched and requested. The 27.4 million biological samples and data from 5.9 million Danes are from large biobanks based at hospitals, universities and other research institutions in Denmark. Data from the biobanks can be linked to disease codes, cross referenced to specific disease categories, operations, procedures and linked to demographic information from national administrative registers on an individual level. The participating biobanks and registers shown below.



The biobanks and registers that make up the Danish Biobank Register
Image credit: <https://www.danishnationalbiobank.com/danish-biobank-register>

The physical DNB building opened in 2012 and houses the 5-6 million samples already available at the State Serum Institute (SSI). The building itself has been constructed to the latest flood-proofing standards with a recovery plant for reuse of surplus heat generated by the freezers on the lower levels repurposed to heat laboratories and office space on the 2nd and 3rd floors. At the heart of the storage facility is a 19 meter high -20 degree tech store with robotic storage and retrieval capability.



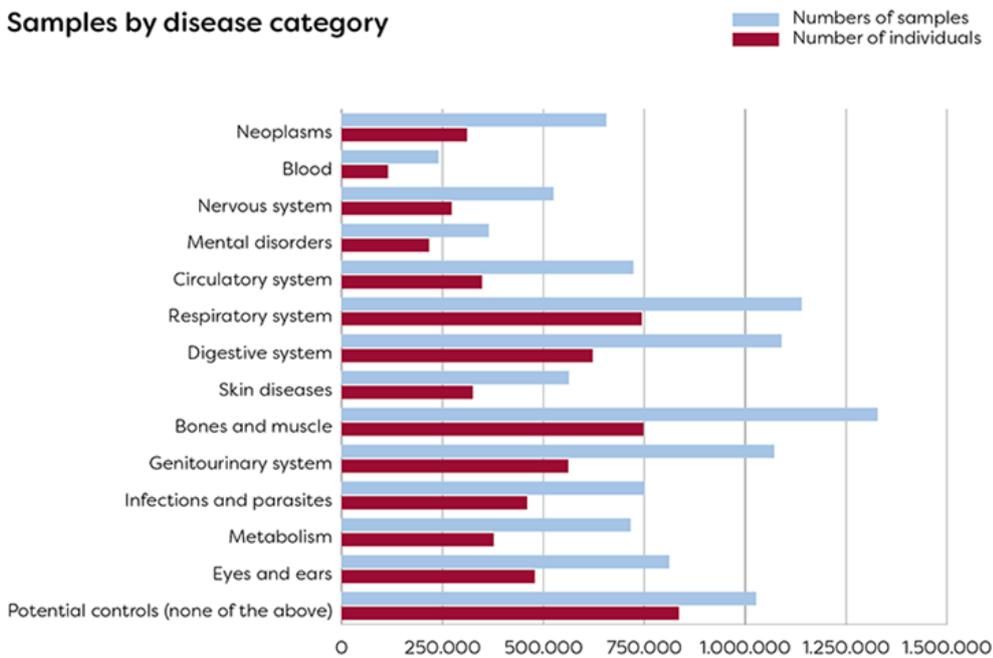
QUICK FACTS

The Danish National Biobank (DNB) is made up of three pillars:

- **The Danish Biobank Register** which links over 27 million biospecimens from participating Danish biobanks to detailed information available in the Danish health system.
- **The physical DNB building** is located on the Statens Serum Institute (SSI) premises. The DNB building covers 3,225 square meters, houses over 12 million biospecimens and includes a robotic system to control the archival and retrieval processes which can access thousands of samples per hour.
- **The Coordinating Centre** which works closely with researchers and biostatisticians at the SSI Department of Epidemiology Research, drawing on their knowledge and expertise in database handling, SNP- and sequence data analysis, to create a strong research environment and knowledgeable advisory centre that offers know how to scientists and external biobanks.

The DNB will, in time contain samples from a very large part of the population – researchers will be able to follow a whole country and its diseases in the registers. Samples from 30 percent of Greenland’s population, and from the whole population of the Faroe Islands and Iceland are also housed here. Samples from more than 800,000 potential controls as well as disease categories are available.

Samples by disease category



Disease categories available at the Danish National Biobank.

Image credit:
<https://www.danishnationalbiobank.com/biological-samples>



"To bank or not to biobank" – Hamlet on biobanking (probably).

The Coordinating Centre occupies the administrative space connecting DNBs physical storage, the register and the laboratory as well as research partners within the SSI. In addition to serving as liaison and advisor to researchers and collaborators with the biobank the Coordinating Centre is also responsible for day-to-day operations of the biobank and updates to the register.

DNB organises an annual course in biobanking for PhD students. Run in collaboration with Lund University (medical faculty), University of Helsinki (social sciences) and the Spanish National Cancer Research Centre this 5 day course is titled "Biobanking in the era of personalised medicine". Students are taught the many facets of modern biobanking and the link to personalised medicine, including ethical, legal and societal implications, how to apply for required ethical and data approvals, they undertake a solid research project based on biobank samples, the course includes a 2-day biobank symposium with speakers from leading biobanks and research institutions.

Denmark stands alone internationally with registers that include everyone living in the country, and they can be followed from cradle to grave – potentially the only country with the whole of its population in a single cohort.

Want to know more about biobanking in Denmark?

The first Nordic Biobank Conference will be held 6-8 September 2022, in Gothenburg, Sweden. With a theme of "Current trends and challenges in the Nordic countries" this conference is jointly organized by biobanks in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.

The conference is hosted by Biobank Sweden with local project management by Biobank Väst. Abstract submissions are open until 31 March and the early bird conference registration rates are available until 20 May 2022.

Click **HERE** to go to the conference website.



INTERNATIONAL BIOBANKING SYMPOSIUM 2022

Congratulations to the team from Biobanking India Foundation (BBIF) and the National Liver Disease Biobank for hosting a successful one day virtual symposium on 22 February.

There were 125 attendees from around the globe who joined the symposium to hear Australia's Prof Dan Catchpoole's keynote address. In his talk 'Beyond sustainability: Keeping biobanking relevant' Dan set the scene for a round table discussion on barriers in biobanking. Led by Dr Birendra Yadav (Regional Ambassador (RA) - India) with ISBER Director-at-Large, Indo Pacific Rim Dr Koh Furuta (Japan), A Prof Jajah Fachiroh (RA - Indonesia), Dr Hahn Vu (RA - Vietnam), Dr Tatsuki Tsuruyama (RA - Japan) and Dr Anusha Hettiaratchi (Australia) this discussion drew on the experiences from each of these regions. The experience of Indian biobankers was presented by Prof Sangeeta Desai, Dr Pallavi Kshetrapal, Dr Birendra Yadav, Dr Prasant Khadke and Dr Anita Mahadevan taking part in a panel which generated many questions from interested and engaged attendees.

Session 2 dealt with legal aspects around biobanking and included talks about MTAs, innovation, biobanking laws/regulations, Singaporean policies and the EU/USA legal frameworks, led by Dr Balwir Matharoo-Ball (Abu Dhabi), Prof Karine Sargsyan (Austria), Prof Nirmal Kumar Ganguly (India), A/Prof Catherine Tay (Singapore), and Dr Rajeev Singh (USA), respectively.

Session 3 focussed on, amongst other topics, biospecimen quality, governance and informatics. This session included presentations by Dr Georges Dagher (France), Dr Robert Hewitt (UK), Dr Zisis Kozlakidis (France), Dr Brent Schacter (Canada) and Shonali Paul (India).

The following awards were announced by Prof B D Malhotra, Vice President BBIF:

BBIF Award for Outstanding Achievement in Biobanking - Dr. Chhagan Bihari, National Liver Disease Biobank, Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences

BBIF Pioneer Award - Prof NK Ganguly, Former Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research & Prof S.K. Shankar, founder Brain Biobank, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences.

ABNA extends their congratulations to all the award recipients.



Screen capture of Prof Dan Catchpoole commencing his keynote address. Also pictured, session host, Dr Birendra Yadav.



NLDB
National Liver
Disease Biobank

CONNECT WITH ABNA ON LINKEDIN

ABNA is on LinkedIn. To connect with us click on the image of our profile or the LinkedIn logo at the bottom of this page.

You can also stay up to date with all our new initiatives and announcements on Twitter and our website.

Tag us on your biobanking posts that would be of interest to our members and followers.



A2LA TRAINING



A2LA Work Place Training (AWPT) is offering a 16 hour course titled 'Understanding ISO 20387:2018 General Requirements for Biobanking'. This course runs in April and again in August - note that course times are in US Eastern Time and the prices in USD. Target attendees are Biobanking Laboratory Directors, Managers, Auditors, Scientists, or Technicians from sites considering accreditation to ISO 20387:2018 General Requirements for Biobanking. All sessions for this course will be presented live, instructor-led on a remote virtual platform.

During this course, the participant will gain an understanding of ISO 20387 through discussion, evaluation, and practical application of the requirements for competent biobank operation and provision of quality biological material/associated data for research and development purposes. Included is a graded exam at the end of the course, which requires a passing score of 70%.

AWPT is an American non-profit organization dedicated to providing high-quality professional training and consulting services in the fields of management systems, conformity assessment, and precision measurement.

Click [HERE](#) to read more.



ABNA 19TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Biobanking – Blue Sky Horizons

19 – 21 October 2022

Rendezvous Hotel Scarborough, Perth, Western Australia

SAVE THE DATE

If you have any suggestions for a short article for Bio-Babble, please contact: abna.biobabble@gmail.com

Content deadline for April edition: 22.04.22



www.abna.org.au



@ABNAonline

