UICC Fellowships: 2021 Annual Report

Building capacity of cancer professionals through the international exchange of knowledge and skills.
Contents

Executive Summary

Introduction

2021 Activities

Five-year strategy

Conclusions and outlook
Executive Summary

➢ 100 applications were processed and 49 in-person fellowships awarded in 2021.
➢ 45 Technical Fellowships were awarded, with 36 from the 2021 call and nine to individuals who applied at the end of 2020.
➢ Four YY Study Grants were awarded to individuals who applied in 2020. 2021 YY Study grant call postponed due to the pandemic, with plans to relaunch in 2022.
➢ 20 applications received from Francophone Africa, an increase indicative of recent emphasis on and support to the region, with 13 fellowships awarded to the region.
➢ Despite continued challenges in terms of travel due to the pandemic, 24 Fellows made in-person fellowship visits in 2021.
➢ Ten Virtual Fellowships supported individuals from UICC members.
➢ Five-year strategy developed in view of the 50th anniversary of the Technical Fellowships in 2026, with the ambition to award more fellowships to cancer professionals working in underserved regions, on topics of global cancer control priority.
Introduction
Fellowships are one of UICC’s oldest and most established programmes.
UICC Fellowships

The Fellowships programme is one of UICC’s most established activities, with over 4,190 fellowships awarded to cancer professionals from around the world working in all aspects of cancer control.

It contributes to UICC’s mission through:

✓ Strengthening the health workforce to improve cancer care and reduce the global cancer burden.
✓ Facilitating networking and international collaboration through one-to-one connections and training.

Dr. Koama Adjarata (left), Burkina Faso visited France for a fellowship on breast cancer imaging.
Fellowships available

➢ **Technical Fellowships** launched in 1976, supports short-term international visits for cancer professionals, with an emphasis on translational and implementation research, and public health approaches, including for example, applications from epidemiologists, cancer registrars and health educators.

➢ **Bourses pour l’Afrique Francophone (BAF)** - French sub-programme of Technical Fellowships launched in 2017 to support and increase access to applicants and cancer professionals from Francophone Africa.

➢ **Yamagiwa-Yoshida Memorial International Cancer Study Grants** (YY Study Grants) launched in 1972, supports international collaborative research visits of three months’ duration for established cancer researchers.

➢ **Virtual Fellowships** launched in 2020 to provide an opportunity for continued training and support through virtual learning opportunities despite barriers created by pandemic.

Dr. Krunal Khobragade (far left), India visited South Korea for his fellowship visit on surgery for low-lying rectal cancer.
Programme chairs and review committees

UICC’s Fellowship programmes are supported by three Fellowship Chairs and in 2021, 54 experts from 26 countries, acted as Fellowship reviewers for UICC.

Nicol Keith: Professor of Molecular Oncology and Experimental Therapeutics at Institute of Cancer Sciences, University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK
➢ Technical Fellowships: Research and Public Health Chair and YY Study Grants Chair

Robert Jones: Professor of Clinical Cancer Research at Institute of Cancer Sciences, University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK:
➢ Technical Fellowships: Clinical Chair

Abdelatif Benider: Professor of Clinical Research at the Faculté de médecine et de pharmacie de Casablanca, Centre Mohammed VI pour le Traitement des Cancers de Casablanca and Institut de Recherche sur le Cancer, Morocco.
➢ Bourses pour l’Afrique Francophone Chair.
Programme partners

UICC would like to acknowledge the support of the Fellowships programme partners whose long-standing support has been gratefully received this year.

Dr. Daniel Moreno (right), Brazil, visited the United States for a research fellowship on glioblastoma.

Fellowships focused on breast cancer are also supported through UICC's Breast Cancer Programme, launched in 2020.
2021 Activities
Applications for in-person Fellowships

- **100** fellowship applications from **39** countries were processed in 2021, including **32** from the 2020 calls for applications from the Technical Fellowships and YY Study Grant calls received at the end of 2020 and processed in 2021.

- All six global regions were represented, with the majority of applications coming from Africa and Asia Pacific.

- Most applications were received from India (29), followed by Nigeria (9) and Burkina Faso (6).

- Applications from Latin America and North America were the least received.

**Global distribution of applications processed**

- **AFRO**: Africa
- **APAC**: Asia Pacific
- **EURO**: Europe
- **EMRO**: Eastern Mediterranean
- **LAT**: Latin America
- **NA**: North America
49 in-person fellowships were awarded in 2021 from 29 countries.

African region particularly well represented, with 43% of awards given to individuals from 13 African countries.

Individuals from nine countries in the Francophone region received at least one fellowship award, demonstrating the success of the BAF sub-programme.

Most applications were received from India (9), followed by Nigeria (4) and Burundi (3).
Overall, 68 Technical Fellowship applications were received in 2021 with 36 fellowships awarded, 17 applications declined and 15 applications still pending a final decision.

Numbers of applications to the Technical Fellowships overall were lower in 2021 compared to before the pandemic. Continued travel restrictions likely to have discouraged applicants from applying.

In contrast, 15 applications were received by the Bourses pour l’Afrique Francophone sub-programme, similar to the number received in 2018 and more than in 2019.

Eight Bourses pour l’Afrique Francophone fellowships were awarded, five were declined and two applications were still pending a final decision at the end of the year.
Fellowship host countries and institutions

- Institutions in France were the most commonly selected to visit by Fellows in 2021, with 16 selecting it as a host country.

- Ten Fellows visited the International Agency for Research into Cancer (IARC) in Lyon, with seven individuals being awarded UICC-IARC Development Fellowships following a competitive selection process to participants of the IARC Summer Schools.

- Fellowships partner National Cancer Centre Korea (NCCK) supported and hosted the visits of three Fellows.

- Institutions in Italy, United Kingdom and the United States each hosted four Fellows.
23 fellowship visits in 2021 were regional in nature, with Fellows choosing to visit a country in the same geographical region as their own. Africa hosted 11 regional visits, while Asia Pacific and Europe each hosted six.

### Africa
- Country of Fellow: Burundi, Host country: Ivory Coast
- Country of Fellow: Burundi, Host country: Senegal
- Country of Fellow: Burundi, Host country: Tanzania
- Country of Fellow: Cameroon, Host country: Ghana
- Country of Fellow: Congo-Brazzaville, Host country: Cameroon
- Country of Fellow: Malawi, Host country: Kenya
- Country of Fellow: Nigeria, Host country: South Africa (x2)
- Country of Fellow: Senegal, Host country: Nigeria
- Country of Fellow: Tanzania, Host country: Ghana
- Country of Fellow: Togo, Host country: Morocco

### Asia Pacific
- Country of Fellow: China, Host country: S.Korea
- Country of Fellow: India, Host country: S.Korea
- Country of Fellow: India, Host country: Japan
- Country of Fellow: Mongolia, Host country: S.Korea
- Country of Fellow: New Zealand, Host country: Australia
- Country of Fellow: Viet Nam, Host country: S.Korea

### Europe
- Country of Fellow: Azerbaijan, Host country: France
- Country of Fellow: Belarus, Host country: Italy
- Country of Fellow: Georgia, Host country: Italy
- Country of Fellow: Georgia, Host country: France
- Country of Fellow: Ireland, Host country: United Kingdom
- Country of Fellow: Spain, Host country: France
Regional fellowships:  
Case study of two Fellows from Burundi

Women living in remote regions of Burundi experience great challenges in getting tested and diagnosed for cervical cancer at stages early enough for treatment to be effective, and the training of health workers on screening techniques for this disease is of paramount importance.

In late 2021, Drs Ndihokubwayo and Ntahondi, two doctors working at the Kamenge University Hospital Centre in Bujumbura, Burundi applied to the Bourse pour l'Afrique Francophone sub-programme to visit hospitals in Senegal and Ivory Coast to obtain training in the screening of patients for cervical cancer and new techniques in cytopathology.

At the Hôpital Général de Grand Yoff, Senegal, Dr Ntahondi learned to analyse and interpret cytology and immunohistochemistry slides to detect and diagnose cancerous lesions of the cervix at early stages. He also received training on how to screen patients and obtain samples for analysis.

His colleague Dr. Ndihokubwayo visited the Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Cocody, Ivory Coast and learned to use a cytobrush to obtain liquid cellular samples and prepare them for histological analysis.

“We plan to establish partnerships with the hosting hospitals to allow other doctors to be trained and exchange knowledge” Dr Ndihokubwayo.
Historically the majority of applications received and fellowships awarded have been clinical in focus, but since its introduction in 2019, applications to the public health category have risen steadily.

In 2021, a more even distribution of applications and awards between the three fellowship types (clinical, public health and research) was observed compared to previous years.

In 2021, 11 applications were received from participants of the IARC summer schools on cancer epidemiology, cancer prevention and early detection, which are all public health topics, resulting in seven Fellowships awards, which may have influenced the distribution this year.
Compared to 2020, fewer applicants selected cancer treatment as a topic in 2021, possibly due to pandemic-related restrictions preventing clinicians from visiting hospitals in many countries this year.

As already mentioned for the increase in applications in the public health category, applications from participants of the IARC Summer Schools may explain the increase in applications in cancer prevention, early detection, pathology, diagnosis and prognosis and in cancer registries and data analysis in 2021.
### Virtual fellowships

- In 2021 ten Virtual Fellowships programme took place virtually through a series of video calls with experts.
- Fellows came from UICC member organisations in the **Asia Pacific region**, including Bangladesh, India and Myanmar, with three organisations having 2 virtual fellowships each.
- Experts came from Europe and Asia Pacific.
- Topics covered included radiotherapy, analysis of population-based cancer registry data, pathology of solid tumours, breast cancer management and geriatric oncology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UICC member organisation</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expert organisation</th>
<th>Expert country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh Cancer Society: 2 Virtual Fellows</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Apollo Hospital, Kolkata</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oncology Club, Bangladesh: 2 Virtual Fellows</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Amsterdam UMC</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare Global Enterprises: 2 Virtual Fellows</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Amsterdam UMC and University of Sussex</td>
<td>Netherlands and the United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>University Federico II of Naples</td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tata Memorial Centre</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Finnish Cancer Registry</td>
<td>Finland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pun Yaung Hnin Si (Pink Rose) Breast Cancer patient support group</td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Breast Cancer Welfare Association*</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shwe Yaung Hnin Si Cancer Foundation</td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Institut Curie</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“In this covid pandemic a visit to a standard radiotherapy center outside the country is almost impossible, and this virtual fellowship has given me the opportunities to learn from an expert. It has given me the opportunity to start a new protocol of radiation in prostate cancer management in my institute. I hope now to treat more patients with this shorter treatment protocol.”

*Dr Chowdhury, Oncology Club, Bangladesh.*
## UICC-IARC Development Technical Fellowships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheila Coelho Soares</td>
<td>Instituto Nacional de Câncer</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Cervical cancer prevention in women living with HIV: analysis of the end of study results of a 10-year cohort study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridget Lumbwe*</td>
<td>The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>Identifying barriers that prevent women with positive CIN2/3 LEEP margins from returning for a repeat LEEP and identifying strategies to address this low adherence to treatments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leyla Mehmetbeyli</td>
<td>National Centre of Oncology of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Azerbaijan</td>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>Oil production and risk of cancer in Azerbaijan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nermin Ahmed Osman</td>
<td>Alexandria University Medical Research Institute</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Establishment of an Electronic based Alexandria Cancer Registry, Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asmita Rana</td>
<td>B.P. Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>Designing a prospective study to assess the delays in cancer care pathway in Nepal and to identify multi-level factors responsible for the delay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manikandanesan Sakthivel*</td>
<td>National Institute of Epidemiology</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Designing a pre-post intervention trial to assess the impact of community health worker-led counselling and navigation on the uptake of colposcopy among non-compliant women screened positive in a community-based screening program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamar Skhirtladze*</td>
<td>National Screening Center</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Enhancing Screening Services for Early Detection of Cervical Cancer in Georgia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*supported by Prevent Cancer Foundation
YY study grants: Case study

Four YY Study grants were awarded in 2021 from the 2020 call for applications, and Dr Smita Joshi from Prayas and Hirabai Cowasji Jehangir Medical Research Institute, India visited IARC, France for three months to study cervical cancer prevention in women living with HIV.

Cervical cancer disproportionately affects women living with human immunodeficiency virus (WLHIV) and the risk of cervical cancer is six times higher among this population. Considering the need for affordable, feasible and effective strategies to prevent cervical cancer in WLHIV, in 2011, Prayas and Hirabai Cowasji Jehangir Medical Research Institute in Pune, India initiated a research study in collaboration with IARC, funded by UICC’s ‘Cervical Cancer Initiative Grants’.

A large cohort of 1,153 WLHIV were enrolled to address research questions related to cervical cancer screening strategies for these high-risk women, leading to four publications in international journals. Dr Joshi’s three-month project in 2021 was to analyse the outcomes of this cohort after ten years.

The study results provide the updated incidence of cervical intraepithelial neoplasia in this cohort, follow-ups of women free of disease, the HPV status and the long-term outcomes of women after treatment.
Five-year strategy
In view of the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Technical Fellowships in 2026, UICC and its Board have reviewed the UICC Fellowships programme, resulting in the preparation of and validation of a new five-year strategy in November 2021, that seeks to increase the impact and reach of this established and well-renowned programme.

The main aim of the strategy is to award more fellowships to cancer professionals working in underserved regions, and on topics of global cancer control priority.

Objectives:

1. **Maximise the number** of individuals and UICC members who can benefit from UICC Fellowships to increase their skills and knowledge.

2. Encourage the **equitable use and allocation** of UICC Fellowships to support the development of cancer professionals in regions and countries of greatest need.

3. Address **key global cancer control priorities** and approaches to amplify UICC’s impact in these areas.
Five-year strategy: Six key areas of action

1. Flexibility
   Fellowship visits of variable duration to be introduced

2. Prioritisation
   Fellowships on key aspects of global cancer control to be prioritised

3. Simplification
   User-friendly application platform to be launched allowing applications in several languages

4. Governance
   Model of governance to be refreshed to fully reflect the global nature of the programme

5. Access
   Prioritise underserved regions and countries; with a focus on Latin America

6. Membership benefits
   Additional opportunities to be made available for UICC members for further support
Conclusions and Outlook
Conclusions

➢ Overall, 2021 was a successful year for the fellowships, even though fewer applications were received than in the years prior to the pandemic.
➢ More applications were received on public health topics aligned with UICC’s thematic priorities.
➢ The number of applications received from and awards going to the Francophone African region increased relative to previous years.
➢ Looking ahead, 2026 will mark the 50th anniversary of the launch of the Technical Fellowships, and will be the culmination of a new five-year strategy designed to increase reach and impact of the programme.
➢ As from 2022, the opportunity to benefit from fellowships of different durations and a new, more user-friendly grant management system platform in several languages will be introduced.
Plans for 2022

- Technical Fellowships and BAF sub-programme will be open between February and December 2022.
- YY Study Grants should be relaunched in Autumn 2022.

In line with the Fellowships five-year strategy, the following aspects will be introduced:

- **Increased flexibility** to the Technical Fellowships through visits of variable duration ranging from two weeks to two months, with a proportional level of funding provided, and depending on the remit of the fellowship.
- **Introduction of a new user-friendly grants management platform** in several languages.

Leverage the 2022 World Cancer Congress in Geneva to showcase the Fellows working on topics aligned with UICC’s mission, and provide opportunities to network and connect.