CHSR

CANCER HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH UNIT

World Cancer Day 2026 Reflections

4 February 2026

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From the CHSR Unit Head

Professor Gang Chen
Head of Unit

On **World Cancer Day 2026**, we pause to acknowledge those at the heart of why we do this work: people living with cancer, those we have lost, and their families and caregivers. This year's theme '**United by Unique**' reflects a core belief of the Cancer Health Services Research (CHSR) Unit: that improving cancer care means listening to people affected by cancer and responding to their needs and preferences. We are proud of our partnerships with consumers, who work alongside us from the start, co-designing research questions, contributing to grants, and shaping decisions. Their generosity and expertise are central to our research.

These partnerships matter because **Australia's healthcare system faces difficult trade-offs**: which innovations truly improve people's wellbeing, and for whom? As a multidisciplinary team, we generate evidence to support better decisions and more equitable cancer care, care that reflects the needs and preferences of people affected by cancer. Our vision is a sustainable and equitable healthcare system guided by robust evidence and shaped by what matters most to people it serves.

A key milestone for the Unit has been completing our role as host of the Health Economics Platform within **The Advanced Genomics Collaboration (TAGC).** This platform has built strong partnerships with consumers, clinicians, policymakers, and researchers, generating evidence to improve understanding of the long-term cost-effectiveness of genomic testing in cancer care.

Professor Gang Chen

Head of Unit

This year, we are excited to launch **ALPACA (A vaLue-based Person-centric enhanced health technology Assessment in CAncer medicine)**. With competitive funding from MRFF, our multi-disciplinary collaborative team will collect and incorporate the perspectives of people living with cancer across the health technology assessment life cycle for three common cancers: breast, melanoma, and lung. This information will be gathered through an online portal co-designed with Peter Mac and built with input from people living with cancer.

World Cancer Day is also a reminder that progress is collective. We are grateful to our collaborators and partners, and especially to the consumers and respondents who generously give their time to participate in our research, ensuring our work remains meaningful and grounded in lived experience. We would also like to sincerely thank our Consumer Advisory Committee for their invaluable contributions in shaping the Unit's strategic direction. We are deeply grateful for the support provided by the TAGC, along with funding support received from VCCC Alliance, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, WEHI, MCRI, NSW ACI (Agency for Clinical Innovation), and government funding through the MRFF, NHMRC, and AEA. Without this support, our research would not be possible.

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Meet the CHSR Team (2025-6)

Professor Gang Chen
Health Economics
Outcomes, Preference, Evaluation

Dr Fanny Franchini
Data Linkage, Simulation
Health Equity

Dr Hadi Akbarzadeh Khorshidi
Simulation, System Dynamics
Machine Learning

Ms Olivia Rowan
Research Team Advisor

Ms Karen Trapani
Epidemiology
Consumer Engagement

Dr Fan He
Health Services Research
Clinical Epidemiology

Dr Juntao Lyu
Health Sociology
Health Economics

Dr Yafei Si
Behavioral and Social Science
Health Preference

Dr Richard To
Clinical Oncologist
Discrete Event Simulation

Dr Jennifer Soon
Clinical Oncologist
Horizon Scanning

Mr Mussab Fagery
Liquid Biopsy
System Dynamics

Ms Bishma Jayathilaka
Clinical Pharmacist
Immune-related Adverse Events

Ms Neslisah Akcan
Genomic Cancer Medicine
Health Policy and Implementation

Ms Nuo Chen
Health Economics
Health Behaviour

Ms Jamaica Briones
Health Economics
Health Technology Assessment

Ms Xinran Liu
Health Economics
Health Preference

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Reflections from the CHSR team

Dr Fanny Franchini

Senior Research Fellow

Fanny's work focuses on generating evidence about how people access cancer care and treatments in Victoria. A growing focus in her research is centred around equity: understanding whether access to treatment differs depending on where people live, their background and circumstances, and what we can do about it. This year's theme 'United by Unique' resonates with her because it reminds her that everyone's experience of cancer is different, and our healthcare system must respond to that.

In the coming year, Fanny looks forward to strengthening partnerships through the National Cancer Cohort Platform and Data Connect, and to working with inspiring colleagues who share this commitment.

Dr Hadi Akbarzadeh Khorshidi

Senior Research Fellow

Hadi advances equitable cancer care by developing dynamic models that assess genomic testing for screening and management, supporting greater population impact and system sustainability.

Through machine learning innovations in breast cancer and other health domains, his work reflects World Cancer Day's United by Unique theme – strengthening personalised, data-driven care for every individual.

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Reflections from the CHSR team

Ms Karen Trapani

Research Fellow

One of the things Karen has most valued in 2025 has been the opportunity to undertake a series of psychometric studies validating a new health and wellbeing instrument measuring quality of life for patients and carers.

Working with local and international collaborators, she enjoyed applying her data-analysis and consultative skills to advance more person-centred, holistic care.

Dr Fan He

Research Fellow

In 2025, Fan completed his PhD on geographical inequalities in stroke outcomes.

He has analysed health utility scores in cancer and inherited retinal disease populations, developed mapping algorithms across utility measures, and built machine-learning risk prediction models for gestational diabetes.

He also serves as Co-Chair of the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences Early Career Academic Committee.

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Reflections from the CHSR team

Dr Juntao Lyu
Research Fellow

Living with cancer is becoming increasingly common as the population ages, and the broad spectrum of cancers and related conditions requires more individualised care. Over the last year, Juntao's work has focused on evaluating the impact of cancer diagnostic technologies and diverse management strategies.

Through clinical evidence synthesising and economic modelling, he aims to maximise the benefits of medical advances while balancing budgetary constraints so that more people can benefit from it in Australia.

Dr Yafei Si
Research Fellow

In 2025, Yafei's work on AI-enabled healthcare consultations gained international recognition, highlighting how technology shapes healthcare decision making and can reproduce health inequalities.

Building on this, Yafei plans to pursue interdisciplinary collaborations and seek funding to evaluate the responsible integration of AI into real-world health systems.

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Reflections from the CHSR team

Ms Neslisah Akcan
Research Fellow

Nesli contributed to a review on genomic testing in cancer of unknown primary, bridging clinical evidence with reimbursement to support equitable implementation.

Seeing cancer from different perspectives has reinforced how unique each journey is, echoing World Cancer Day's theme and the importance of advanced diagnostics for truly individualised care.

Ms Nuo Chen
PhD Student

Nuo joined the Cancer Heath Services Research team in March 2025 as a visiting PhD student.

She is currently working on health preference and economic evaluation for lung cancer screening.

Nuo's strong interest areas include cancer screening research, particularly in the areas of health economics, modelling, and preference-based analysis.

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Reflections from the CHSR team

Ms Xinran (Jenny) Liu
PhD Student

Xinran's research focuses on the real-world implementation of precision medicine in blood cancers.

By integrating patient and physician preferences, real-world evidence and economic modelling, her work aims to identify barriers to implementation and support more equitable access to genomic testing, ensuring that advances in precision medicine translate into people-centred benefits for everyone affected by blood cancer.

Ms Jamaica Roanne Briones
PhD Student

Jamaica began her PhD in 2025 under the prestigious Melbourne Research Scholarship, focusing on how risk-rate insurance policies can better incentivise preventive health behaviours based on genetic risk information.

She is excited to explore collaborative and funding opportunities to support this important work.

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PhD opportunities with CHSR

☐ Our HDR Supervisors

Professor Gang Chen
Health Economics | Health Preference | Quality of Life | Economic Evaluation

Accepting PhD students with the following backgrounds:
- Health Economics
- Public Health
- Health Services Research
- Health Policy and Systems

Dr Fanny Franchini
Real-world Evidence | Simulation Modelling | Equity Research | Epidemiology

Accepting PhD students with the following backgrounds:
- Epidemiology
- Clinical Research
- Health Services Research
- Public Health

Dr Hadi Akbarzadeh Khorshidi
Decision-making | Machine Learning | Operations Research | Optimisation

Accepting PhD students with the following backgrounds:
- Health Economics
- Intelligent Modelling
- Health Services Research
- Public Health

Dr Juntao Lyu
Health Economics | Medical Sociology | Disease Modelling | HTA

Accepting PhD students with the following backgrounds:
- Health Economics
- Public Health
- Health Services Research
- Health Sociology

Dr Yafei Si
Health Economics | AI in Healthcare | Health Preference | Macroeconomic Modelling

Accepting PhD students with the following backgrounds:
- Health Economics
- Digital Health
- Health Services Research
- Public and Global Health

Dr Fan He
Clinical Epidemiology | Health Services Research | Data Science | Health Economics

Accepting PhD students with the following backgrounds:
- Epidemiology
- Clinical Research
- Public Health
- Health Services Research