



Interview with Prof. Savio George Barreto: pancreatic cancer—an old problem needs a fresh perspective

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Editor's note

As an emerging journal in the field of clinical oncology, *Chinese Clinical Oncology (CCO)* has published a number of special series in recent years, receiving overwhelming responses from academic readers around the world. Our success cannot be achieved without the contribution of our distinguished guest editors. Taking this opportunity, *CCO* launched a new series “Interviews with Outstanding Guest Editors” this year to highlight our active contributors. We hope to express our heartfelt gratitude for their tremendous effort and to further uncover the stories behind the special series.

The special series “Unresolved Issues in Pancreatic Cancer” led by Prof. Savio George Barreto (*Figure 1*) from Flinders University has attracted numerous readers since its release. It included 11 articles of diversity and high quality that mainly aimed to unravel the lacunae remained in pancreatic cancer research and management. Hereby, we are honored to have an interview with Prof. Barreto to share his experience in scientific career and his insights on this special series.

Expert introduction

Associate Professor Barreto is a gastrointestinal and hepato-pancreato-biliary (GI & HPB) surgeon and researcher. He is a consultant surgeon on the HPB Unit, Flinders Medical Centre, deputy director of the Flinders Doctor of Medicine (MD), and the coordinator of the MD Advanced Studies, College of Medicine and Public Health (CMPH), Flinders University. He is a member of the International Study Group of Pancreatic Surgery (ISGPS) and serves

on the editorial boards for *Pancreatology* and *World Journal of Surgery*, amongst others. He is the editor of the books ‘Surgical Diseases of the Pancreas and Biliary Tree’ and ‘Dilemmas in Abdominal Surgery: A Case-Based Approach’. He is a member of the Indian Council of Medical Research Task force group that developed the guidelines for managing pancreatic, gastric and neuroendocrine cancers in India.

Interview

CCO: *As a reputable expert in the field of gastrointestinal and hepato-pancreato-biliary research, what drove you into this field in the first place?*

Prof. Barreto: Globally, there is a rather nihilistic view to gastrointestinal (other than colon cancer) and HPB adenocarcinomas. During my early years in surgical training, I came to increasingly realize that it was not enough for a surgeon treating patients with these cancers to be skilled and competent. It is imperative that surgeons remain curious about the diseases they treat, and lead research in the field. As a surgeon, I touch one life at a time. However, by being actively involved in research, would empower me to impact many more lives. This realization prompted me towards research in addition to my clinical commitments.

CCO: *You have rich experience during your career as a surgeon in both India and Australasia. Could you share the differences in pancreatic cancer treatments between the two regions?*

Prof. Barreto: The major difference between the two



Figure 1 Photo of Prof. Savio George Barreto.

regions is in the proportion of periampullary lesions, as compared to pancreatic cancer. In India, I treated a higher proportion of periampullary cancers, compared to Australia where we see a comparatively lower proportion of them. From a treatment perspective, there is no difference, as the practices of evidence-based medicine are embraced by surgeons in both regions.

CCO: *Congratulations on your Burns-Alpers Award for Excellence in Clinical Teaching! What improvement in clinical teaching do you think shall be made to help young surgeons be aware of the unresolved issues in pancreatic cancer?*

Prof. Barreto: Thank you. Educating young surgeons about what we know of pancreatic cancer and its treatment is important. The next step is to encourage them to reflect on the current knowledge highlighting the poor survival that continues to plague pancreatic cancer patients. In doing so, in the words of Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, their inquisitive minds, by bringing a fresh perspective, may be able to think what no one has thought of despite seeing what everybody else has seen.

CCO: *What kind of projects are you recently working on? How are they related to this special series?*

Prof. Barreto: I am working on deciphering the origins

of pancreatic cancer. I am also investigating young-onset cancers, including pancreatic adenocarcinoma (I have published a few papers in the last 2 years on this). The paper I co-authored with Nilesh, and Shilpee in the special series provides a sneak peek into the thoughts driving that research.

CCO: *Which part of the content impressed you most in this special series? Comparing with other similar projects, what do you think is the unique advantage of this special series?*

Prof. Barreto: The diversity of topics, as well as the honest appraisal of our current state of knowledge, and the ensuing appreciation of lacunae (unresolved matters), by global experts in the field makes this special issue very meaningful. All of the manuscripts were of a high standard, and I am grateful to the editorial team, especially, Ms. Elva Zhang, for all her support. The quality of the special series was greatly enhanced by the expert panel of peer-reviewers with their insightful comments.

CCO: *If there is a chance to update this special series, what content would you like to moderate, add or emphasize more?*

Prof. Barreto: There remain many unresolved issues in pancreatic cancer and I look forward to the opportunity to update the special series in a year, or two.

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Footnote

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