THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP

Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

19 November 2009

Cancer Research Grants Announced

Today I announce the successful grant applications under the 2009 round of the Priority-driven Collaborative Cancer Research Scheme.

Cancer touches the lives of all Australians.

That's why the Rudd Government is tackling cancer on a range of fronts – including by investing in world class research that will translate into better treatment of cancer.

The Rudd Government is contributing $7.6 million to fund or co-fund these research grants.

Cancer is one of our National Health Priorities, which recognises the major impact it has on the Australian community.

At current rates, one in three men and one in four women in Australia will develop cancer by the age of 75. By age 85, the risk increases to one in two for men and one in three for women.

Cancer is the leading cause of premature death in Australia. It is projected that this year more than 40,000 Australians will die as a result of cancer.

The good news is more than half of all cancers diagnosed in Australia are successfully treated.

That's because we have some of the very best cancer researchers and research institutes in the world, and have made big inroads into treating the disease.

Under this scheme, Cancer Australia partners with other funders of cancer research, and it's this collaborative approach that is helping to deliver great results.

While the Rudd Government is contributing $7.6 million to this round, the funding partners are contributing more than $4.6 million. So I thank them for their enormous contribution.

The standout projects that have received funding include:

- In a study co-funded by Leukaemia Foundation, Radiation Oncology Section of the Department of Health and Ageing and Cancer Australia, Professor John Seymour, of Peter MaCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne, will test if a new scanning technique (PET-CT) can help determine poor-risk patients with Hodgkin's lymphoma who require more intensive treatment. This study has the potential to impact internationally on the way treatment is delivered and has the ability to improve outcomes while minimising treatment related toxicity such as infections, late malignancies and infertility.

- In a study co-funded by Cancer Council Australia, the National Breast Cancer Foundation and Cancer Australia, Dr Bettina Meiser, of the Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney, will assess the impact of treatment-focused genetic testing in women newly diagnosed with breast cancer, on psychological and decision-related outcomes and decision-making about risk-reducing surgery. This study will provide the first Australian data on the impact of treatment-focused genetic testing on women's decision making and it will be the first economic analysis internationally which will look at the long-term cost-effectiveness of treatment-focused genetic testing compared with standard care. This study will provide us with the evidence on how to safely provide treatment-focused genetic testing to women newly diagnosed with breast cancer.

- In a project co-funded by Beyondblue and Cancer Australia, Associate Professor Michael Jefford of Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne will evaluate an innovative program comprising individualised information, a nurse-led end-of-treatment consultation and telephone follow-up for people with potentially curative bowel cancer, aiming to reduce psychological distress and unmet needs. If successful, this approach could be disseminated to other cancer survivors.

- A project co-funded by Prostate Cancer Foundation Australia and my department and Cancer Australia, Associate Professor Jeremy Millar, of Monash University, will establish a clinical registry of patients with prostate cancer that will rapidly progress to becoming a state-wide resource, similar to those that have been developed in Victoria for surgery and trauma. It will provide an accurate representation of the quality of healthcare and treatment outcomes of men with prostate cancer, which will allow prostate cancer to keep pace with developments in other cancer streams. This registry will reduce variation in outcomes by identifying areas of need and directing resources appropriately.

- And in supporting research projects undertaken by young researchers, the Cure Cancer Australia Foundation and Cancer Australia will co-fund Dr Kerrilyn Deiner from the Hanson Institute in Adelaide to use microfluidic chip technology to isolate rare circulating cancer cells from the blood of people with pancreatic cancer. The development and use of this technology may assist in assessing response treatment and may help increase knowledge about cancer progression.

All these projects make efficient use of existing therapies and aim to improve the quality of life for patients with cancer.

Congratulations to these and all the successful recipients.

A list of all successful grant recipients can be found on the Cancer Australia website – www.canceraustralia.gov.au

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220.