



MEDIA RELEASE
Thursday, 25th November 2010

MAJOR CANCER RESEARCH BOOST

Western Australia's best scientists have been given a major boost in their fight against cancer, with the announcement today of \$2.4 million in grants from the Australian Cancer Research Foundation (ACRF).

The grant will allow the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) to fund a highly expensive scanner for imaging tumour development. It's a pre-clinical animal PET scanner.

Acting Director of the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research, Professor Peter Leedman said the research grant was a once in a lifetime opportunity which would profoundly change the landscape for cancer research in Western Australia.

"Imaging for cancer management and diagnosis in humans is fundamental," he said. "And equally in pre-clinical models of cancer, it's a central part of cancer research. This PET scanner will enable us to image cancer progression in animals like we've never been able to do before.

"The important thing about PETs is that they allow you to take an image, look at the activities of the cancer (and how active the tumour is), in contrast to an MRI, which just tells you there's a lump. That's a huge outcome. We don't currently have a small animal PET scanner in Western Australia. It will drastically change the sort of pre-clinical analyses in our animal models." he said.

"It's about parallel systems. So if you have a cancer that you're studying in humans via PET scans and MRIs, what we're now trying to do is have a parallel system where we can set up pre-clinical models and image those in just the same ways. Being able to do things in parallel helps us enormously. In fact, in the pre-clinical models we're often treating the mice with the same drugs. We induce tumour models that look like the human model of the cancer, and we can now actually treat those animals in ways that are very similar to the human model. And that's helping us understand the progression of human disease. It's really important to have the capacity to image mice just as extensively and with as much finesse, as it is in humans. And that's what this scanner is about," Professor Leedman said.

As well as the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research, the PET scanner will also be used by WA experts in their fields at the University of WA, QEII Medical Centre, Royal Perth Hospital, Princess Margaret Hospital, the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, the Lions Eye Institute and Pathwest.

The ACRF grants are directed at creating the infrastructure, notably new laboratories and equipment, to fast-track key research and increase the knowledge of ways to prevent cancer and develop more effective treatments.

“With these grants, ACRF continues our critical contribution to world-class, breakthrough projects,” said ACRF Chairman Mr. Tom Dery.

“Essentially, we are accelerating innovative cancer research across this country by providing our best scientists with the infrastructure and equipment to do their jobs more effectively and quickly.”

The Foundation also awarded grants of \$2 million to The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute (Melbourne) and \$1.6 million to Monash Institute of Medical Research (Melbourne).

WAIMR media contact: Carolyn Monaghan 0448 021 932.