

Cancer research and related grants 2008

Peer assessed Tasmanian cancer research grants, scholarships, and support for clinical trials

A fundamental part of The Cancer Council Tasmania's fundraising program is the financing of cancer research. Each February the Cancer Council allocates funds received from public donations towards significant research currently being undertaken within Tasmania.

In February 2008 The Cancer Council Tasmania and the David Collins Leukaemia Foundation distributed \$344,300. This brings to over \$3 million the amount invested in cancer research and related projects by The Cancer Council Tasmania since its inception in 1995 – all thanks to the generous support of the Tasmanian community.

The Cancer Council Tasmania research project funding in 2008

**Elucidation of the role of a novel
susceptibility gene in prostate cancer**
Menzies Research Institute
Dr Jo Dickinson: \$25,000

The Tasmanian Familial Prostate Cancer Study is an ongoing study to identify the genes contributing to prostate cancer. Dr Dickinson's team has recently identified a gene significantly associated with the risk of developing prostate cancer. This research will examine the role of this gene in tumour development. The outcomes of this research have direct application to the development of novel biomarkers for prostate cancer detection and the discovery of new therapeutic targets.

**The effect of UV radiation and vitamin D
deficiency on the development of the skin
immune system**
Menzies Research Institute
Associate Professor Greg Woods: \$50,000

Sunburn as a child increases the risk of skin cancer in later life, but without sunshine we can not produce vitamin D3. This project will define the contributions of sunlight and vitamin D3 on the development of the skin immune system in early life and the risk of skin cancer in later life. This will indicate the importance of the developmental period for the skin immune system and the involvement of UVB and vitamin D in skin cancer.

The Cancer Council Tasmania Research Fellow

Dr Jo Dickinson: \$115,000
(\$345,000 over three years)

The Cancer Council Tasmania has provided funding to set up a post-doctoral research fellowship in cancer at the Menzies Research Institute. This is an opportunity to develop a recognised cancer research program within Tasmania. This award has enabled Dr Jo Dickinson to continue her research in cancer genetics. The identification of the underlying genetic abnormality in many diseases, including cancers, has led to a greater understanding of the disease and in some cases, directly to a significant therapeutic advance. Dr Dickinson leads a research team investigating the genetic basis of hereditary cancers, and her current research focus is understanding the genetic basis of prostate and blood cancers.

Funded by the David Collins Leukaemia Foundation

**Characterising aberrant RUNX1
transcriptional complexes**
Menzies Research Institute
Dr Adele Holloway: \$20,000

A significant proportion of leukaemias arise because of genetic changes that alter the activity of a protein called RUNX1. This project will investigate how changes to RUNX1 cause changes within cells that lead to leukaemia. Although we can not reverse the changes to RUNX1, there is great potential to modify the cellular changes caused by RUNX1 and hence work towards treatments for leukaemia.

Investigating the genetics of familial haematological cancers in Tasmania
Menzies Research Institute
Dr Jo Dickinson: \$25,000

Haematological malignancies include cancers such as leukaemia, lymphoma and myeloma. Treatment of these blood cancers has improved and survival rates have steadily increased, but with significant side effects and burden on the health budget. Genetic factors are known to contribute to the risk of developing blood cancers, however, to date little is known about the underlying genetic causes of these diseases. This study aims to identify genes predisposed to the development of blood cancers. The study will use new high density genome scan technology to obtain genetic profiles of members of families with multiple cases of disease.

Associated research projects

Small Grants Scheme for New Researchers \$25,000

Breast Cancer Clinical Research Grant—donated by Thirgoods \$10,000

Athena Karydis Foniadakis Scholarship Catherine Wren: \$4800

Jeanne Foster Scholarships:

Amber Laidler: Registered nurse, Calvary Healthcare Tasmania

To complete a Post Graduate Certificate in Cancer Nursing through La Trobe University.

Sharon Murcott: Cancer Council Nurse, The Cancer Council Tasmania

To complete a Masters of Nursing (Nurse Practitioner) through Curtin University.

Lisa Cleary: Radiation therapist, Holman Clinic Royal Hobart Hospital

To complete a Masters Program in Health Science – Medical Radiations through the University of Sydney.

Jen McGuiggan: Clinical trials manager oncology, Launceston General Hospital

To attend the Australia and New Zealand Breast Cancer Trials Group Annual Scientific Meeting in Wellington, NZ in July 2008.

Liesel Fitzgerald: Student, Menzies Research Institute

To attend the Geonomics of Common Disease conference at Cambridge, UK.

Jeanne Foster Scholarships continued overleaf

Bernadette Hogan: Radiation therapist, Holman Clinic Launceston General Hospital

To attend the 1st International meeting of Advanced Practice in Radiotherapy and Oncology at Sheffield Hallam University

Marion Davies: Pharmacist/medical student, University of Tasmania

To attend the 28th Annual Asian Medical Students Conference, Seoul, South Korea

The Cancer Council Tasmania Honours Scholarship \$10,000

Flora Cheong

Vitamin D and the skin immune system.

Clinical trials at LGH and RHH

\$54,500 will support data management for clinical trials in a range of cancers at the Launceston General and Royal Hobart Hospitals. Clinical trials help develop new cancer treatments and we encourage patients and doctors to discuss participation in trials.