Cancer research receives $98 million boost

Research to improve our understanding the causes of cancer and to develop new treatments has received a $98.9 million boost following the announcement of new National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grants today.

The research will explore a range of factors affecting the development, spread and treatment of a range of cancers including prostate, pancreatic and breast cancers.

NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson was confident that the 156 grants would offer important insights into the biology of cancer and lead to better outcomes for patients.

“NHMRC grants are awarded to only the most scientifically rigorous and innovative ideas and these grants in the field of cancer research are no exception,” Professor Anderson said.

“NHMRC is the principal funder of cancer research in Australia and I know that these grants will contribute much to our nation’s understanding of this disease and the treatment of patients.”

“Health and medical research has already led to better treatments and lower death rates for many cancers, but there is still a long way to go.”

“Almost one in two men and one in three women will be diagnosed with cancer by the time they are 85, so it is important that our researchers continue to find ways to prevent and treat cancer,” he said.

Cancer is one of the Australian Government’s nine National Health Priority Areas.

“The government’s National Health Priority Areas are also priority research areas for NHMRC,” Professor Anderson affirmed. “In this current round of funding, around $308 million is going towards research focused on the NHPAs.”

The grants were part of a $539.8 million announcement made today by Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Minister for Health Peter Dutton, for 773 grants across a broad range of diseases and health conditions.

Research highlights

Dr Muhammad Shiddiky, University of Queensland, Career Development Fellowship ($411,768)
Dr Shiddiky will seek to develop a new diagnostic tool for the early detection of cancer. The tool is focused on isolating, detecting and characterising “circulating tumour cells” in the bloodstream, which have been shown to correlate with survival outcomes and response to therapy.

Dr Emily Blyth, University of Sydney, Early Career Fellowship ($184,718)

Dr Blyth’s research is focused on improving survival rates for people with acute myeloid leukaemia (AML). Through her fellowship, she will seek to develop an additional therapy to chemotherapy and hematopoietic stem cell transplantation – the most common procedures for treating leukaemia. The additional therapy involved modifying patients’ donor T cells to specifically target an antigen common to a type of AML.

Associate Professor Kiarash Khosrotehrani, University of Queensland, Project Grant, ($922,589)

Melanomas rely on the development of new blood vessels to distribute nutrients and energy to different parts of the growing tumour. Associate Professor Khosrotehrani’s research will focus on mapping the formation of new blood vessels, and determine whether targeting the source of the blood vessels can stop the spread of the tumour.

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Further information

More information about the grants announced today can be found on the NHMRC website under Outcomes of funding rounds.