

MEDIA RELEASE - 2 MAY 2007

Young Australian Scientist Honoured at International Meeting

Children's Cancer Institute Australia's (CCIA) PhD student Petra Bachmann was bestowed a special honour last week when she carried the Australian flag at the opening ceremony of the largest cancer conference in the world.

The American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) celebrated the global impact of 100 years of cancer research with an opening ceremony to mark the beginning of a week long conference involving 68 member nations and more than 17,000 attendees.

Ms Bachmann, a PhD student in the Leukaemia Biology Program at CCIA and enrolled at the University of New South Wales, was selected to represent Australia and carry the flag during the AACR's Centennial Opening Ceremony.

"It was such an honour to carry the Australian flag and to represent my country at the ceremony. We often associate opening ceremonies with sporting events but researchers are just as competitive and passionate about their work and what better way to highlight the great work we are doing and to recognise the achievements of our scientists," said Ms Bachmann.

Ms Bachmann was one of only a small number of students worldwide who received an award and was selected to present the results of her research at the conference, impressing the Program Committee of the AACR with the high standard of her application. She is currently studying a class of drugs known as glucocorticoids which are used to treat Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia (ALL), the most common childhood cancer.

"In some children the cancer cells develop resistance to the drugs and finding an effective treatment becomes a problem," said Ms Bachmann.

"We are trying to gain a better understanding of what causes this resistance and what can be done to manage drug resistance in leukaemia patients. With this knowledge, doctors will be able to devise more effective treatment strategies for patients."

Ms Bachmann will be completing her PhD in early 2008 and hopes to continue in childhood cancer research.

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