



EMBARGOED until Wednesday 28 February, 2007

Common cold virus may kill breast cancer cells – National Breast Cancer Foundation announces exciting progress

Australian scientists believe they may be able to use a common cold-producing virus to successfully treat breast cancer patients, in a way that is much less debilitating than chemotherapy.

University of Newcastle researcher Kathryn Skelding, funded by the National Breast Cancer Foundation and Viralytics Ltd, has been working on a new treatment which only affects cancer cells – this would be an improvement on conventional chemotherapy and radiation treatment, which also impact on normal body cells.

“In theory, the virus is able to selectively target and destroy many different types of cancer cells, including breast cancers, whilst leaving normal cells unaffected,” she said.

Debilitating symptoms associated with conventional treatments (such as nausea, vomiting and hair loss) could also be avoided by using the Coxsackie virus.

“If this research is successful we could have something that produces side effects as harmless as a mild, common cold-like infection yet it could successfully treat breast cancer,” Ms Skelding said.

Latest research to be revealed at Canberra briefing

The Skelding project, and other ground-breaking research, will be discussed at the NBCF Annual Breakfast Briefing, a series of national events to communicate with the Foundation’s corporate and general public supporters.

In Canberra, the breakfast briefing will be held on Thursday March 22 at Parliament house.

University of Wollongong’s Professor Don Iverson will report on the progress of breast cancer research in Australia. His presentation will highlight achievements, and the way ahead for breast cancer research in order to have the greatest impact on the disease.

The NBCF has thrown its weight behind a National Action Plan for Breast Cancer Research and Funding, developing sustainable research collaborations, which could halve the time it will take to answer the big questions in breast cancer.

National Breast Cancer Foundation CEO Ms Sue Murray said NBCF funds are directed to the best research in Australia, unlimited by state boundaries.

“The NBCF is committed to funding the Australian research that will have the biggest impact on the prevention and treatment of breast cancer. This research will be translated into benefits for all Australians, regardless of which State the research is conducted in.” Ms Murray said.

About breast cancer

Breast cancer is the most common invasive cancer diagnosed in women in Australia. It is estimated that almost 13,300 Australian women will be diagnosed this year. It is the leading cause of cancer death in females, accounting for 2600 deaths in 2004 (last available national figures). With continued support and funding from peak organisations like NBCF, improvements in research mean survival rates are on the rise.

About NBCF

NBCF is Australia’s only independent, not-for-profit community organisation supporting and promoting high quality research into the prevention, detection and treatment of breast cancer. Since it was established in 1994, it has funded over 158 research projects, totalling \$27.4 million, resulting in significant discoveries.

NBCF research priorities for 2007 include:

- * Young women and breast cancer
- * Advanced breast cancer
- * Novel health service delivery

-Ends-

For further media information, or to arrange an interview with a NBCF spokesperson or the highlighted researchers, please contact:

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