

3 April 2007

Media Release

Cure for cancer one step closer

The cure for cancer is one step closer this week with the first collections of cancer tissue taking place at the new Wesley Research Institute Tissue Bank.

The Tissue Bank is the first of its kind in Queensland to provide a widely available and diversified collection of ethically consented and clinically annotated tissue, helping to unravel the cause, progression and potential treatment for cancer and other diseases.

Professor Julie Campbell AO, Director of The Wesley Research Institute, said the current absence of large, high quality cancer tissue and blood collections with clinical data is a major barrier to improving care of cancer patients

“Queensland research has taken an enormous step forward this week. There is every possibility that findings made achievable by the Tissue Bank will lead to the next big breakthrough in the fight against cancer,” she said.

“By providing researchers who are part of an ethically and scientifically approved research project with tissue, matching blood samples and full clinical data, valuable funds will be saved, which can then be applied to further their research.

“There is compelling evidence that new methods for screening, diagnosis and evaluation of cancer can make a significant impact on cancer care in the immediate future,” Professor Campbell said.

Dr John Lumley, a surgeon from The Wesley Hospital, said that these specimens would be donated by consenting patients during the course of their normal treatment.

“I encourage patients and surgeons to support the important work of the Tissue Bank because everybody can play a part in the cure. Every cell contains a clue that can make a difference to tomorrow’s cancer patients,” he said.

Queensland is well placed as a source of cancer tissue due to its diverse population, large number of aged retirees, and high-rate of some cancers, particularly melanoma. The Wesley Hospital alone had almost 2000 cancer related surgeries in 2004.

The Queensland Government contributed \$1.42 million towards the construction of the Tissue Bank through the Smart State Research Facility Fund.

The investment has built and equipped, as part of the Institute’s infrastructure, a dedicated laboratory with high-precision equipment for preparation and study of tissue samples.

This equipment includes an Aperio Scan Scope which takes high resolution images of tissue samples that can then be shared with researchers around the world, and two vapour phase nitrogen storage vessels (-196°C) and two -80°C freezers which have the capacity to house in excess of 164,000 tissue and blood samples.

The small sections of tissue collected from patients will be stored in cryogenic vials which will help preserve the tissue's proteins and genetic material almost indefinitely.

The Wesley Research Institute is a leading medical research facility with a commitment to patient care, ethical conduct and quality research that aims to improve quality of life through better diagnosis and treatment.

The Institute urges patients who are considering donating their tissue to discuss their decision with their family and doctor.

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