

Melbourne institute gets \$590k funding for stomach cancer

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Singapore: Scientists at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in Melbourne, Australia, have been awarded funding from Cancer Council NSW to support research that will further understanding of stomach cancer. Cancer Council NSW has contributed \$590,000 towards the research.

Stomach cancer is the second highest cause of cancer-related deaths globally, and the fourth most common cancer diagnosed worldwide. In Australia, more than 2000 cases are diagnosed annually.

Dr Lorraine O'Reilly from the institute's Molecular Genetics of Cancer division will lead the research team, which aims to find ways of better detecting the early stages of stomach cancer. Most cases of stomach cancer were diagnosed at a late stage, when there were few effective treatment options available, Dr O'Reilly said. "We have been able to develop a new model which replicates all the stages of human stomach cancer, including how it spreads throughout the body," she said.

It is not well understood how stomach cancer begins, although several risk factors have been identified. These include inflammation of the stomach lining (gastritis), stomach ulcers, the blood disorder pernicious anaemia, the consumption of certain types of preserved or pickled foods, and inheriting stomach cancer risk genes. "This funding will allow us to look closely at each stage of stomach cancer, from its inception through to its metastatic spread throughout the body," Dr O'Reilly said. "One important aspect of stomach cancer development, which we will be focusing on, is the link between inflammation of the stomach lining and cancer development. We hope our research will lead to better ways to diagnose early stage stomach cancer, which can be successfully treated with surgery, and to determine better medications for treating the more advanced disease, particularly once it has spread beyond the stomach."

The research team will include Dr Marco Herold and Professor Andreas Strasser from the institute's Molecular Genetics of Cancer division, and Dr Tracy Putoczki and Associate Professor Matthais Ernst from the institute's Cell Signalling and Cell Death division, working in collaboration with Professor Paul Waring from the University of Melbourne, Professor Steve

Gerondakis from the Australian Centre for Blood Diseases, Associate Professor Alex Boussioutas from the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and The Royal Melbourne Hospital, Associate Professor Richard Ferrero from the Monash Institute of Medical Research, and international collaborator Dr Laure Dumoutier from the Catholic University, Brussels, Belgium.