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Media release

Peter Mac and MCRI welcome funding commitment for ‘Zero Childhood Cancer Initiative’

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute (MCRI) welcome the commitment of \$20 million to support the Zero Childhood Cancer Initiative.

The goal of ‘Zero Childhood Cancer’ is to create a national personalised medicine program for infants, children and adolescents with high-risk cancers that typically have poor outcomes.

If fully implemented, the program would allow every newly diagnosed paediatric cancer patient in Australia with a poor-outcome cancer, and every child that relapses following treatment irrespective of tumour type, to have their therapy tailored to their own tumour’s genetic characteristics.

“Identifying the genes responsible for childhood cancer is a key step towards making treatments more tailored to the individual child, with the ultimate goal of better outcomes for all,” says Peter Mac’s Professor Ricky Johnstone.

“The project is highly technical and national in scope, requiring a significant investment in infrastructure and equipment to deliver on its goals. Pledges such as today’s will be vital to its success.”

The national alliance is made up of centres of clinical and research excellence within the paediatric oncology field – including Victoria’s The Royal Children’s Hospital, Murdoch Childrens Peter Mac who will collaborate on the initiative.

Peter Mac will provide expertise in cancer immunology across the program.

“This is a really important initiative, as it will drive personalised medicine for childhood cancers,” says A/Professor Paul Ekert, from MCRI, which has 30 years of expertise in genetic medicine.



“This will enable us to treat the most difficult childhood cancers and maximise chances at finding cures, while reducing the toxicity of treatments. We can do this by ‘reading’ the genetic code of the tumour to tailor the treatment to that child.”

Peter Mac and MCRI acknowledge the support of Cancer Therapeutics CRC, Australian Cancer Research Foundation (ACRF), The Kids Cancer Project, The Cure Brain Cancer Foundation, the Children’s Cancer Institute and the NSW, Vic, Qld, SA and WA State Governments who have funded the pilot program.

For more information or to arrange an interview with one of the past or present patients in attendance please contact: Peter Mac: Julie Bissinella (0478 199 791); and MCRI: Caitlin Moore (0452 193 800)