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Boost to world-class melanoma research

World-class research into melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, has been boosted with Dr Jessamy Tiffen, Head of the Centenary Institute's 'Melanoma Epigenetics Laboratory', receiving a \$447,000 project grant from Cancer Council NSW.

The grant will be used by Dr Tiffen to investigate new treatment approaches for patients with advanced stage melanoma.

Dr Tiffen said that new immunotherapies and targeted treatments provided hope for patients with advanced melanoma. However, for many patients, these treatments were ineffective or only worked for a limited time before the cancer developed resistance.

"Sadly, the majority of advanced melanoma patients will suffer relapse and die from the disease. There is an urgent need to identify new drugs for those individuals with no treatment options and to develop new drugs that can prevent recurrence of tumours," said Dr Tiffen.

The focus of Dr Tiffen's project will be the investigation of the histone methylation process which she believes plays an important role in driving treatment resistance in melanoma.

"Histone methylation involves protein activity around your DNA that can change the way your genes are expressed and can lead to changes in cell behaviour," said Dr Tiffen.

"We believe that abnormal levels of histone methylation in both melanoma cells and dysfunctional immune cells could be causing resistance to treatment."

In the laboratory, Dr Tiffen will be testing different approaches to control histone methylation in melanoma. She hopes the research will lead to new drug treatments to stop melanoma growth or reverse the deadly treatment resistance.

Professor Mathew Vadas AO, the Centenary Institute's Executive Director, said the successful grant was a superb outcome for a vital project.

"The Centenary operates at the very forefront of this exciting aspect of melanoma research in Australia and I congratulate Dr Tiffen who has been awarded this important funding. I look forward to seeing the outcomes of this research which has the potential to help reduce the tragic loss of life associated with melanoma in this country."

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Images:

Dr Jessamy Tiffen (1):

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Vx8G7YN1rcubj4WdRLOoa7SpVV7iGqC-/view?usp=sharing>

Dr Jessamy Tiffen (2):

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1llu44Tlvj3bsibsVO9JpNzO80PwmHVJ3/view?usp=sharing>

For all media and interview enquiries, please contact

Tony Crawshaw, Media and Communications Manager, Centenary Institute on 0402 770 403 or email: t.crawshaw@centenary.org.au

About the Centenary Institute

The Centenary Institute is a world-leading independent medical research institute, closely affiliated to the University of Sydney and the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Our research focuses on three key areas: cancer, inflammation and cardiovascular disease. Our strength lies in uncovering disease mechanisms and applying this knowledge to improve diagnostics and treatments for patients.

For more information about the Centenary Institute, visit centenary.org.au