Innovator Grants achieve success within a year

The recipients of last year’s Cancer Council NSW Innovator Grants have already had substantial success with new discoveries in oesophageal and liver cancer that might lead to better prevention, diagnosis and treatment. While one year is generally not enough time to fully test a new breakthrough, their research is already showing significant promise.

Success story — Oesophageal cancer

Associate Professor Wayne Phillips, of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, has done some fascinating work into how Barrett’s oesophagus (a lesion that commonly leads to oesophageal cancer) might be passed down in families. By using cutting-edge technologies to look at the genetic code of three families that have Barrett’s oesophagus, Associate Professor Phillips and his team are closing in on the genes that cause this condition. This will help find people at high risk of the cancer and allow them to be treated early, as well as giving us insight into exactly how this dangerous cancer works.

Success story — Liver cancer

Dr Kathy Willowson’s work at the University of Sydney is breaking new ground in liver cancer treatment. One of the pioneering therapies for this cancer is microspheres — tiny radioactive particles that are directly introduced into the liver and deliver precise, highly targeted doses of radiation to help destroy tumours. Current methods of planning this treatment are limited, leading to treatments that may deliver sub-optimal doses of radiation. Dr Willowson is working with Sirtex Medical to trial a more accurate way to plan this treatment, which promises to lead to better, more personalised therapy for liver cancer patients.

Cancer Council NSW awards a range of grants each year, from multimillion dollar five-year programs to focused, one-year Innovator grants. These innovator grants give $100,000 to researchers to solve specific, interesting problems. They are also an excellent way to help researchers early in their career get a start in the industry.
Cancer Council research projects

Become a research volunteer

Cancer patients, survivors and carers help Cancer Council NSW decide what research to fund each year. And their input is just as important as the expert academics who judge the scientific merit of the applications for funding we receive.

To prepare cancer survivors and carers for this task, we provide research training once a year. The knowledge consumers gain through training also prepares them to work directly with researchers on specific research projects, ensuring that research has the greatest possible impact for cancer patients and their carers.

In 2012, Cancer Council NSW’s consumer research training—undertaken in collaboration with Cancer Voices—was hugely successful. 29 cancer survivors, carers and family members completed a two-day course covering various types of research. They learned how we govern research to ensure it is conducted in an ethical manner that treats all participants with respect and dignity. The training included talks from leading researchers, a panel discussion, and hands-on activities for participants.

We were extremely grateful for the guest appearances by James Butler, Chair of the Cancer Council NSW Consumer Review Panel, Dr Kathy Willowson of the University of Sydney and Dr Cleola Anderiesz of Cancer Australia.

The two days spent by these survivors and carers being trained in research is a substantial commitment, and it confirmed the essential contribution consumers make to cancer research.

You too can have a say in deciding which research we should fund. If you are interested in becoming a research volunteer, please contact Sam Thorp at research@nswcc.org.au

If you’ve lived with cancer then help others with your experiences

Living with cancer is a huge challenge. It can change so many aspects of how you live your life from your daily routine to your ongoing relationships. Encouragement and support from the people around you plays a huge part in maintaining your perspective and raising hope for the future.

Cancer Council aims to ensure that no one faces a cancer diagnosis alone, but we need your help so we can do it even better.

We know that if you’ve been through a cancer experience you’ll recall that there was so much to know and understand it was almost overwhelming. Your personal experiences, and how you managed, can offer an anecdotal shortcut to people who are just confronting the diagnosis of cancer. You can also help us share our message that sometimes the only people who really understand are those who have had cancer touch their lives. They’ve been through loss, anger, depression and eventually discovered hope. To share that discovery is the best thing.

Many people like helping those who are going through what they did, explaining “there is light at the end of the tunnel, you may not believe it now but there is”.

Cancer Council NSW gives the NSW community a voice on issues and entitlements around cancer. If you’re one of the many people who have been on the cancer journey would you be willing to be contacted by the Cancer Council NSW media, events or advocacy teams?

Call Elle McGlynn on (02) 9334 1925 or email ellem@nswcc.org.au

If you have cancer, are a cancer survivor, or a family member, would you share your story and join the network of people ‘out there who are ready to help?’

Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20
www.cancercouncil.com.au
The CLEAR Study is aiming to recruit people with cancer and, where possible, their cancer-free partners, to help identify causes of cancer which could be related to genetics or lifestyle. By October 2012 we have over 7,900 people in the study, with a target of 10,000.

If you or your partner have been diagnosed with cancer in the past 18 months, you live in NSW, and are aged 18 or over, then take the survey and make a difference. Go to www.clearstudy.org.au or call the CLEAR Study Hotline on 1800 500 894.

Who are the people behind the CLEAR Study?

Visalini Nair-Shalliker
Post Doctoral Research Fellow

Visalini Nair-Shalliker was born in Malaysia and moved to Australia as a student. She married an Australian and is here to stay. She has degrees in science and a Masters in Public Health. Lini worked at the Children’s Medical Research Institute before coming to Cancer Council to do a PhD on sun exposure and prostate cancer. Her work on prostate cancer continues, and she manages the CLEAR Study project team.

Lini’s spare time is spent with her children, involving herself with their sporting activities.

Michael Revius
Project Coordinator

Originally from California, Michael moved to Sydney in 2008 to be with his fiancée (now wife) and joined the CLEAR study as Project Coordinator the same year. His background is varied and includes project management at Pfizer R&D in San Diego, establishing a not-for-profit international volunteer organisation in Arusha, Tanzania, and even some local-style commercial tuna fishing off the coast of Hilo, Hawaii. His days fishing are behind him for now, as Michael spends most of his non-work hours with his one year old baby girl and his wife who’s expecting in early 2012.

Christina Christou
Senior Research Assistant

Christina joined CLEAR in 2008. She has a degree in Health Science, a Masters of Public Health, a Diploma in Nutrition and an Advanced Diploma of Naturopathy. Among her many interest are making chocolate from scratch—that’s from beans to bar!

On CLEAR, Christina checks the information which comes in from study participants and makes sure it’s complete. And she manages the database of participant information, and the many applications to ethics committees.

Usha Salagame
PhD Student

Born in India, Usha has had a varied career in cancer research in Australia, involved mainly in women’s cancers. That interest continues with the work she is doing for her PhD. Usha holds the Tour de Cure PhD scholarship and has been with us for two years. In her limited leisure time Usha enjoys cooking and entertaining.

Naomi Noguchi
Project Researcher

Naomi is the newest member of the team. She’s Japanese, and came to Sydney to further her studies. Naomi is preparing for a PhD at Cancer Council, and is working on CLEAR Study data. At weekends Naomi and her friends can be found sharing hula hooping tricks.

In addition to these project staff CLEAR is fortunate to have the services of long term volunteers Paddy Waley and Vivien Pitt who bring their significant experience and expertise to a range of tasks for the CLEAR Study.

The CLEAR Study had reached almost 8,000 cases and controls by the beginning of October 2012. Linkage with the NSW Central Cancer Registry is complete. The Study has reached the last stages of preparation of governance documentation and systems prior to release of samples and data. We have already had external interest from researchers to use the data, and there are currently two research project students from University of Sydney Masters of Public Health programs.
Cancer Council research projects

Call us and help increase Aboriginal cancer survival

Cancer is the second biggest killer of Aboriginal people in Australia, with the death rate from cancer being 60% higher in Aboriginal people than in non-Aboriginal people. With your help, Cancer Council NSW wants to bring this death rate down.

“Access to treatment centres and feelings of isolation while in hospital are some of the barriers that we believe may prevent Aboriginal people from accessing the same level of healthcare as non-Aboriginal people,” said Veronica Saunders, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Cancer Council NSW.

“These issues are putting lives at risk, with NSW’s Aboriginal population being up to three times more likely to die from some types of cancer than non-Aboriginal people.”

Aboriginal cancer patients are encouraged to join the ‘Pathways to Diagnosis Study’ which will investigate the barriers that Aboriginal people face resulting in a delay of diagnosis or a delay in accessing medical services.

We need 200 Aboriginal cancer survivors to join our study so that we can understand why this cancer death rate is so high. Their participation could help us to remove any barriers to early diagnosis and treatment and improve the unacceptable cancer survival rate.

The study is open to any Aboriginal person, aged 18 and over, diagnosed with cancer after July 2010.

For more information, call 1800 247 029 (calls are free) to speak with an Aboriginal liaison officer.

The study has been approved by the Ethics Committees of Cancer Council NSW, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and the NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC).

$60 gift voucher
for a 20 minute phone call to discuss your medical care before your cancer diagnosis

Cancer Council conducts research studies with people from NSW. These studies may be questionnaire based surveys, focus groups and interviews or other types of research. (Study participants will not necessarily be cancer patients)

Register your interest to be included on our Study Mailing List. Your story or the story of someone you know will help us find the answers.

☐ Yes, please include me on the study mailing list (if yes, we will write to ask you some additional questions relating to your health to allow us to match you to research studies that suit you)

☐ Tick this box if you have been diagnosed with cancer in the past 18 months (you may be eligible for the CLEAR Study and we will send you information)

☐ I know someone with cancer who might like to be in the CLEAR Study. Please send me a brochure.

At Cancer Council we recognise the importance of your privacy and the safeguarding of your personal information. If you have concerns about the privacy of the information, you may provide it securely on-line at cancercouncil.com.au/joinastudy. Please be assured that in collecting this information it will be used for research purposes only, and will be handled in accordance with our Privacy Management Plan (www.cancercouncil.com.au) which addresses our compliance with all legislative requirements.

You can also register at cancercouncil.com.au/joinastudy

Help us beat cancer

Join a research study NOW!