



Media Release

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Combined melanoma treatment may be model for treating other cancers

Brisbane: Two types of treatment for cancer are being trialed together for the first time on patients with melanoma, a scientific conference of cancer experts will be told today (14/11).

Head of the Medical Oncology Skin and Melanoma Clinical Service at Peter MacCullum Cancer Centre, Professor Grant McArthur, will tell delegates at the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia's Annual Scientific Meeting that the success of the combined treatment may well provide a viable model for treating other cancers.

According to Professor McArthur, there are now two approaches to treating patients with melanoma - identifying genetic mutations that drive the disease and targeting the immune system.

"These approaches have been developed at the same time, by coincidence. The next wave is putting them together," Prof McArthur said. "We think using the treatments sequentially will reduce the death rate in patients at high risk of their cancer returning.

"There has been a transformation in effective treatments for melanoma in the past few years. Melanoma research is coming up with innovative ways to treat cancer that may provide lead for other areas of oncology."

The study is a collaboration between researchers in Australia, the US and Europe. Subject to the success of the clinical trials, the combined treatment could be available in as little as three to five years.

Clinical Oncological Society of Australia President, Professor Bogda Koczwara, said melanoma was the fourth most common cancer in Australia, with more than 1200 Australians dying of the disease each year.

"Australia has been a world leader in skin cancer awareness and prevention," Professor Koczwara said. "This new treatment gives hope to the 10 per cent of patients who cannot be treated with surgery."

Wednesday 11.40-11.55pm, Great Hall, Brisbane Convention Centre

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