



## Media Release

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## New hope in hunt for 'unknown' cancers

**Brisbane: Australian researchers have developed a test that can identify the primary source of cancer in patients with Cancer of Unknown Primary (CUP), hoped to improve treatment outcomes for the nearly 2800 Australians diagnosed each year.**

Researchers at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne, in collaboration with NICTA, Circadian and Healthscope, developed the test that, in trials, accurately identified the primary source of cancer in more than 90% of cases.

CUP describes a cancer with an unknown site of origin, where the cancer cells have spread around the body. CUP is the sixth most common cause of cancer death in Australians.

Head of the Cancer Genomics Program at Peter Mac, Professor David Bowtell, will describe the test today (13/11) to cancer specialists at the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia's (COSA's) Annual Scientific Meeting in Brisbane.

"CUP is a distressing and frustrating diagnosis for both patients and their doctors," Professor Bowtell said. "In some cases you can do extensive clinical and pathological tests but still not confirm the site of origin, often causing distress to the patient. Older or very sick patients, especially, may not be up to such extensive testing."

Professor Bowtell said the new test profiled the activity of thousands of genes simultaneously and matched them to a database of gene expression patterns of all known tumours. "Genetic profiling using microarray technology has been demonstrated to be effective in classifying cancers.

"Accurately identifying the primary tumour will allow clinicians to choose the most effective treatment strategy, hopefully leading to better outcomes and quality of life for these patients."

The CUP test is being trialled and expected to be released before the end of the year.

COSA President, Professor Bogda Koczwara, said researchers worldwide had been working on ways to better identify CUP. "If successful, this test will not only bring certainty to CUP patients and their families, but has the potential to save lives through more targeted treatments."

Tuesday 2.40-2.55pm, Great Hall, Brisbane Convention Centre

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