



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 13 November 2018

Treating the '3rd wave' of mesothelioma

Experts meet in Perth as new data shows two Australians diagnosed every day

Leading cancer experts gathering in Perth this week will discuss the latest evidence on mesothelioma, coinciding with the release of new data showing that 710 Australians were diagnosed last year.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare released new data today that will also be presented this week as a part of the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting (COSA ASM).

The latest report shows that 5-year survival rates from the cancer remain very poor at 5.4%, Australia has one of the highest rates of mesothelioma in the world and that WA has the highest rate in the country.

While previously mesothelioma was a disease largely related to occupational asbestos exposure, the latest statistics also show that 94% of women and 22% of males diagnosed weren't exposed at work, suggesting some asbestos exposure is also occurring during activities like home renovations.

Leading oncologist Dr Anna Nowak, from The University of Western Australia and Cancer Council WA Researcher of the Year, will chair a panel of Australian and international experts attending the conference today to discuss the challenges.

"The new report shows why we desperately need more research and better treatment options. The conference will delve into the latest evidence on some of the critical issues, like whether all patients should be biopsied, the role of immunotherapy and the role of genetics."

A trial led by Dr Nowak that tested the use of an immunotherapy treatment alongside chemotherapy for mesothelioma is also being presented at the conference.

"Our recent trial showed that an immunotherapy drug can be safely given alongside chemotherapy to extend survival. The Australian research has been well received internationally and may change the way mesothelioma is treated if this is confirmed in an upcoming Australian-led international trial.

"Mesothelioma research is an area where Australia can lead the world, so it's great to have so many experts together in one space to discuss the latest advances."

Professor Phyllis Butow, President, Clinical Oncology Society of Australia, said mesothelioma was a focus for this year's conference, alongside gastro-intestinal cancers.

"Among states and territories for which data were available, WA had the highest rate of mesothelioma, so it is appropriate we are focusing on this type of cancer at our Perth meeting. We wanted to gather cancer experts to discuss the latest treatments and evidence, as well as focusing on the perspective of those affected and the support they need."

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A spokesperson from AIHW will also be available for interview at the COSA ASM.

For media enquiries, interviews, or case study stories, call Hollie Harwood on 0400 762 010 or email hollie.harwood@cancer.org.au

About the COSA ASM

The Clinical Oncology Society of Australia ASM is Australia's premier oncology event with delegates including clinicians, researchers, medical and radiation oncologists, cancer surgeons, nurses, pharmacists and allied health workers.

This year's conference themes are mesothelioma and gastro-intestinal cancers.

The event is being held from 13 – 15 November at the Perth Conference and Exhibition Centre.

Top Australian and international speakers will present the latest research and developments in cancer to more than 700 delegates in Perth this week, with a focus on research, treatment and supportive care.