

media release

EMBARGOED: 12.01AM Friday 31st October 2008

World-first study accelerates progress towards the cure of prostate cancer

Australian and New Zealand researchers have identified new measures of patient progress using Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood tests that could halve the time of future clinical trials in prostate cancer, thereby doubling the rate of progress towards a cure.

Results of the study published in the *Lancet Oncology* this week were obtained by examining data from a large scale prostate cancer trial (called 96.01) conducted by the Trans-Tasman Radiation Oncology Group (TROG) in Australia and New Zealand based at Calvary Mater Newcastle, NSW.

“From the 96.01 Trial data we have been able to demonstrate that two measures of PSA change - which reflect how quickly the cancer has returned, and the rate at which the cancer is growing – can be used as early end-point measures in large scale prostate cancer clinical trials,” said Professor Jim Denham, Chief Investigator of the TROG 96.01, and a researcher at the University of Newcastle, Australia.

“Due to the large scale and prolonged follow-up time required in prostate cancer clinical trials, it can take well over a decade before researchers know what the results are. By applying these PSA measures to clinical trials data we will be able to know the results much sooner and therefore commence trials of promising new therapies more quickly.

One of the world’s largest prostate cancer clinical trials, 96.01 began patient enrolment in 1996 and concluded in 2000. It then followed all 802 patients from diagnosis through treatment, and carefully documented their progress afterwards. Only now in 2008 are reliable, mature results emerging.

“We applied these measures to the 96.01 study and found that we could have predicted the trial results back in 2002, only two years after the last patient had started the trial,” said Professor Denham.

“The present study confirms what many people intuitively believe, but this is the first statistically robust demonstration that these markers can be used to halve the time of patient follow-up in large scale clinical trials.”

In future, these measures may also enable researchers to identify subgroups of men who relapse after curative treatment for prostate cancer and who either require treatment straight

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away and could benefit from new experimental therapies and conversely, those who will not require treatment for many years.

Professor Denham is a senior specialist in radiation oncology at Calvary Mater Newcastle working in collaboration with the Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI) Cancer Research Program. HMRI is a partnership between the University of Newcastle, Hunter New England Health and the community.

This study was funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Hunter Medical Research Institute, AstraZeneca and Schering-Plough.

Professor Denham is available for interview.

Vision opportunity - Friday 31st October 2008

Time: 12 noon

Where: Calvary Mater Newcastle, NSW

Meet at the Platt Street entrance

Interview with Professor Denham and a prostate cancer patient who is involved in the latest TROG trial, graphs illustrating the research results, xray images.

Media contact: Lauren Eyles, Hunter Medical Research Institute Communications Manager, on 0434 600 940 or 4921 4841.

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