

22 February 2023 | Sydney Cancer Partners Announces Recipients of Unique New Fellowships Scheme

Sydney Cancer Partners has awarded two Translational Partners Fellowships in a unique scheme that pairs a researcher with a clinician-researcher.

The joint fellowships – each of which is worth up to \$300,000 per year over three years - are designed to develop a cancer research group or initiative that spans from the laboratory to the clinic.

Postdoctoral research fellow Dr Dannel Yeo from The Centenary Institute at The University of Sydney and Clinical Associate Professor Kate Mahon from Chris O’Brien Lifehouse will work together to explore ways to improve the management and outcomes for patients with colorectal and appendiceal cancers that have metastasised to the peritoneum.

Yeo and Mahon say that peritoneal metastases from colorectal and appendiceal cancers confer poor prognosis and are not well understood.

“Treatment options are limited, and the only potentially curative treatment involves surgical removal of the peritoneum followed by instillation of heated chemotherapy. However, recurrence is very common” said Yeo and Mahon.

“Our translational research project aims to identify liquid biopsy biomarkers to aid clinical decision making, develop tumour models to test new therapies and ultimately improve outcomes for patients.”

The second partnership brings together paediatric oncologist Dr Bhavna Padhye from the Children’s Hospital Westmead and computational biologist, Dr Rebecca Poulos from the Children’s Medical Research Institute (CMRI) who will work to embed newly developed, clinically relevant, proteomic technology into the cancer clinic.

“We will use mass spectrometry (MS) to first focus on neuroblastoma to address an area of unmet clinical need by defining signatures that improve prediction of treatment response, and then apply these methods to other paediatric cancer types with poor outcomes. Our goal will be to establish a real-time platform at CMRI for MS-based proteomics of paediatric cancer patients,” said Drs Padhye and Poulos.

The Director of Sydney Cancer Partners, Professor Anna DeFazio AM, congratulated the funding recipients.

“We are thrilled to announce the successful applicants of this unique scheme, which is funded via a Translational Cancer Research Capacity Building Grant from the Cancer Institute NSW.”

“The format of these fellowships is based on our experience that impactful translational outcomes can be generated by clinicians and researchers working closely together to solve a common problem.”

“We hope to foster enduring collaborative partnerships between a researcher, and a clinician researcher, who demonstrate potential as future research leaders – and by doing build our capacity for translational research.”

To ensure impact on clinical outcomes and research culture, the Fellows will be connected with, and supported by a relevant clinical or multi-disciplinary team.

“This scheme demonstrates our commitment to nurturing the next generation of research and clinical leaders, enabling them to contribute to improving outcomes for cancer patients in NSW by working together to develop a cancer research group or initiative that spans from the laboratory to the clinic.”

“We had far more excellent applications than could be funded under this scheme, demonstrating the depth of talent and enthusiasm for this translational model.”

The Executive Director of Sydney Health Partners, Professor Don Nutbeam, welcomed the appointments.

“We believe the needs of clinical practice should have more influence on the cancer research agenda and this scheme will assist in aligning the two more closely in ways that benefit our health service partners,” he said.