

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**Friday 3 November 2023**

**NEW CENTRE TO DEVELOP TREATMENTS FOR AGGRESSIVE CANCERS**

Aggressive and hard-to-treat cancers will be the focus of new research centre at The University of Western Australia to develop and test new treatments, using the power of RNA technology.

The Cancer Research Trust has provided funding over five years to establish the Australian Centre for RNA Therapeutics in Cancer and with co-investment, the grant totals \$12 million.

Centre chief investigator Professor Archa Fox, from UWA's School of Human Sciences, said aggressive and hard to treat cancers were responsible for many deaths in Australia.

"We need more effective therapies that support better quality of life," Professor Fox said. "RNA therapies can be tailored to individual patients and tumours, making it a promising technology for cancer treatment.

"Our proposed pilot projects will create treatments to improve outcomes for some of the most aggressive and hard-to-treat cancers such as pancreatic, triple negative breast, lung cancer and sarcoma."

Professor Fox said researchers' overall understanding of how to design, make and test RNA as a precision genetic therapy for cancer would help herald a new era of precision and personalised cancer therapies.

"We know people want less toxic and more effective treatments that can be delivered more easily. RNA may be one solution to these problems and our research will propel us along this translational pathway."

The multidisciplinary centre will create a new biotech industry which will attract leading researchers and improve outcomes for a wide range of cancers.

"Our deep knowledge base will attract national and international collaborators, venture capital and pharmaceutical companies to partner with our researchers in developing products," Professor Fox said.

"The Centre will establish an mRNA production facility for research-grade RNA therapeutics in cancer and become a node for applying these in cancer treatment."

Professor Anna Nowak, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) said the Centre would enable RNA innovators to work hand in hand with oncologists, consumers and patient advocates to design, synthesise, test and improve pilot RNA products.

“The Centre has the potential to improve cancer outcomes in WA and give local cancer researchers a powerful competitive edge,” Professor Nowak said.

Other funding partners include Therapeutic Innovations Australia, UWA, WA State Government, Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research, Telethon Kids Institute, Cancer Council WA, Curtin University and global life sciences company Cytiva.

**MEDIA REFERENCES:**

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