

OVERVIEW OF CANCER INSTITUTE NSW RESEARCH PROGRAMS, PRINCIPLES and PRIORITIES

Introduction

Cancer research is providing the evidence that will drive rapid improvement in cancer prevention, treatment and the subsequent improvements in survival and quality of life of cancer patients. The cancer research supported in NSW must be performance driven and deliver meaningful and highly significant outcomes.

The acceleration of better cancer control will be driven by new cancer research discoveries. The NSW Cancer Plan 2007-2010 aims to make these discoveries more quickly available to cancer patients and clinicians through research grants and more support for clinical research staff in hospital. The NSW Cancer Trials Network is being expanded under this Plan to make promising new drugs and techniques available more quickly to patients and to evaluate their benefit.

Guiding Principles

The Cancer Institute NSW Research Program is not a duplication of the grants available from the NHMRC or ARC for cancer in NSW. Rather it is strategically designed to specifically address issues of capacity, relevance and competitiveness raised by the Wood's Report and the Cancer Institute's own reviews of cancer research in NSW.

Cancer research offers the best hope of further accelerating the decline in cancer death rates, ensuring more effective screening and improving our ability to prevent or treat cancer. The NSW Cancer Plan 2004-2006 has invested in the best and most successful cancer researchers in NSW with an emphasis on applying research discoveries to patient care as quickly as possible.

The NSW Cancer Plan 2004-2006 has substantially increased the capacity of NSW to quickly translate research discoveries into better treatments and cancer prevention. New large research programs have been created including targeted cancer therapy. The programs developed will focus on the identification of those at risk, identify new tests for screening and will evaluate new therapies for cancer.

The NSW Cancer Trials Network has been established to support clinical trial units across the state, to test promising new cancer treatments. The clinical trial programs supported by The Cancer Council NSW and the Cancer Institute NSW have been brought together to better support clinical trials in NSW.

Investment in cancer research promises great benefit in the longer term. Already new therapies, new approaches and a new culture of innovation and research is emerging in NSW hospital from this support.

NSW Cancer Research Priorities

Cancer research will drive improvements in cancer control in NSW under the NSW Cancer Plan 2007-2010. To stimulate further innovation and new approaches to cancer control, cancer research in NSW must be at the international cutting edge and well connected to international centres of excellence. Cancer researchers in NSW should access the best available research expertise available by increasing collaborations through scientific networks and planning to develop key expertise collaboratively and over the longer term.

The State Cancer Research Priorities which were embodied within the research philosophy of the NSW Cancer Plan 2004-2006, will be further developed in the NSW Cancer Plan 2007-2010. The aims of the Cancer Research Program are to:

- Support cancer research that can be quickly translated into benefits for cancer patients, for the prevention of cancer or its early detection.
- Recruit and support researchers in NSW to become more skilled and more internationally competitive.
- Provide enabling infrastructure to improve international competitiveness and relevance.

Program Overview 2007-2010

The Cancer Institute NSW overall Research Division is represented by the breakdown into the three main programs:

- Cancer Research Grants and Infrastructure Program
- Cancer Research Ethics Program
- Clinical Trials Research Program

During the NSW Cancer Plan 2004-2006 several reviews were conducted to identify the strengths, gaps and opportunities to make cancer research more effective for cancer control in NSW and to make NSW more internationally competitive. The reviews conducted included:

- Review of Cancer Research Activity in NSW 2001-2003
- Review of research platforms and technologies
- Review of Cancer Institute NSW funded research
- Ethics review of cancer research activity
- Cancer research round table

Additionally, consultative workshops were conducted in August 2006, which were beneficial in bringing together key cancer research stakeholders. These workshops further clarified the strengths and weaknesses in cancer research in NSW. Key area for support and development were agreed to be:

- Sustainable career paths (including attracting gifted researchers from interstate and overseas).
- Research infrastructure, including:
 - Support for technical staff and governance arrangements for research infrastructure.
 - Development of innovative models to encourage networking and collaboration.
- Development of smarter models to enhance translational research and ensure the rapid transfer of research findings into cancer clinical practice and policy.
- Developing capacity in public health, epidemiological and health services research.
- Establishment of a collaborative structure or network for clinical trials in NSW with agreed targets for clinical trial participation and access.
- Streamlined ethical review processes to support cancer patients having access to scientifically robust and ethically sound clinical trials.

Additional information regarding the Cancer Institute NSW Research Programs can be found in the NSW Cancer Plan 2007-2010, located on the website www.cancerinstitute.org.au.