THE AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF DERMATOLOGISTS

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NEW LIQUID BIOPSIES FOR MELANOMA DETECTION

Today, Professor Mel Ziman from Edith Cowan University, presented new world leading findings on liquid biopsies for early melanoma detection and monitoring at the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD) Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) in Sydney.

Melanoma cases in Australia are on the rise with approximately 13,000 new cases last year, resulting in 1,600 deaths. Treatments, whilst improving slowly, are expensive and may have severe side effects.

Professor Mel Ziman says: "Current methods of melanoma diagnosis and prognosis are at times problematic and limited to observation of tumour tissue by histology or imaging. In our studies, which we began last year, we utilised protein arrays, devices to measure autoantibodies, mutant tumour DNA and circulating tumour cells in patients with very early to advanced stage metastatic melanoma. These tests differentiate normal from disease blood, which allows the detection of melanoma in its very early stages and can also predict disease relapse without the need for tissue biopsies."

As one of the institutions investigating liquid biopsies, Edith Cowan University (ECU) Melanoma Research Group, are validating their blood tests with the aim to translate them into clinical use in Australia and worldwide for personalised patient assessment and disease monitoring, improving patient outcomes and long term survival, thus saving lives.

Dr Victoria Mar, dermatologist with the ACD says: "Liquid biopsy tests have the potential to revolutionise how we monitor and treat melanoma. Being able to better identify patients with early stage melanoma who are at high risk of relapse and monitor them more effectively will vastly improve management for patients after a diagnosis of melanoma."

Prof Ziman says: "The blood tests will transform the way patients are screened. With this personalised monitoring of patients, the melanoma's reaction to treatment in the clinic can also be detected early, in relative real time. This empowers the oncologist to make rapid decisions to alter treatment plans. More efficient monitoring will improve therapy success, while reducing costs and extreme side effects."

The ECU Melanoma Research Group are working with top West Australian clinicians to bring the blood tests from lab to bedside within three to five years.

Prof Ziman says: "Our studies demonstrate the utility of blood based liquid biopsies to assist with diagnosis, prognosis and monitoring of melanoma patients. We are aiming for these tests to be available to everyone so that we can detect melanoma early, monitor patients at a variety of stages and ensure better health outcomes."

Links to further information

Annual Scientific Meeting website

ECU Melanoma Research Group

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The ACD is the peak medical college accredited by the Australian Medical Council for the training and professional development of medical practitioners in the specialty of dermatology. They provide authoritative information about dermatology to Government, the media, other health professionals and the general public.

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