



19 September 2008

World first for cancer researchers

A world first for researchers at The Children's Hospital at Westmead has fundamental and generic importance in cancer cell biology. They have shown for the first time that a gene previously associated with many cancers, tumour protein D52, is associated with reduced cancer patient survival. This shows that D52 may have use as a diagnostic marker and a treatment target.

The research was reported as the cover story for the journal *Clinical Cancer Research*, published in the US.

The team from Australia and France looked at the functions of tumour protein D52 and a related protein. While the proteins look similar, only D52 is often expressed in cancer. In the published study, only tumour protein D52 caused normal cells to resemble cancer cells. When lots of this protein was present in breast cancers, patient survival rates also went down.

The survival study was done in breast cancer, as there was a suitable and large cohort available. The team at The Children's Hospital at Westmead is now investigating D52 expression in other cancer types, including childhood cancers.

"As tumour protein D52 may be involved in many cancer types, we believe that there's a good chance that further research could really help a lot of patients" said lead author Associate Professor Jennifer Byrne, Acting Head of the Oncology Research Unit at The Children's Hospital at Westmead.

The Children's Hospital at Westmead is the highly respected, largest paediatric centre in NSW, providing excellent care for children from NSW, Australia and across the Pacific Rim. Established in 1880, *The Children's Hospital at Westmead* is a stand-alone public Hospital and registered charity with 3,000 staff working in 150 departments. Over 50,000 sick children and their families are cared for each year in a family-focused, healing environment.

The unique environment of The Children's Hospital at Westmead allows for ground-breaking research into the causes, treatments and cures of childhood illnesses to be directly applied to clinical care, resulting in better outcomes for sick children.

Funded by the NSW Government, *The Children's Hospital at Westmead* provides significant extra services aided by the generosity of individual and corporate donors. For more information visit www.chw.edu.au

For further information contact: Leonie Leonard, Public Relations Manager, The Children's Hospital at Westmead. T: 02 9845 3580 a.h. 02 9845 0000 E-Mail: leoniel@chw.edu.au