

HEALTH TODAY

Cathy Saunders

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New team set to fight cancers

Gynaecological researchers hope to improve women's lives

A biospecimen bank of gynaecological cancers will be established in Perth to boost research into their cause, genetic pathways and a cure. A tissue and blood sample will be taken of every ovarian and endometrial cancer, with the consent of the patients. This is likely to be broadened to include other gynaecological cancers.

The samples will be stored and used for studies, some of which will be conducted in conjunction with interstate and overseas groups.

The biospecimen bank is a joint venture between St John of God Hospital and the new WA Gynaecologic Cancer Research Centre being set up under the leadership of Yee Leung, a gynaecological oncologist at King Edward Memorial Hospital.

Professor Yeung, who was recently recruited as the first professor in gynaecological oncology at the University of WA, said the research would not only look at causes and cures for gynaecological cancers but also ways of improving the lives of women with the cancers.

Most gynaecological cancers are of unknown cause, with the exception of cervical cancer, which is mostly triggered by the human papilloma virus.

Every year more than 450 women in WA receive a diagnosis of gynaecological cancer and the number is expected to rise, with the exception of cervical cancer which is expected to drop in incidence after the introduction of the cervical cancer vaccine and Pap smear screening.

In 2006, there were 160 cases of uterine, 122 cases of fallopian tube and ovarian, 57 cases of cervical, 27 cases of vulval, 13 cases of vaginal and 11 cases of peritoneal cancer. Cervical cancer is the only gynaecological cancer that has a



Leader: Yee Leung, head of the new WA Gynaecologic Cancer Research Centre.

successful screening program. Others are picked up only when a woman develops symptoms.

WA is unique in Australia in having a single gynaecological cancer service, based at KEMH, which provides clinical care for more than 96 per cent of diagnosed women in metropolitan, rural and remote areas.

Professor Yeung said the research centre, which would not have a new building but be a virtual centre that involved a range of researchers, was being developed to complement the teaching and clinical service at KEMH.

"We can capture everybody (with gynaecological cancer), we have this advantage," he said. "The research pillar needs to be developed so we have home-grown research that will be of benefit to the WA community."

Professor Yeung likened the Statewide

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gynaecological cancer service, with its myriad specialist doctors, nurses and other health professionals, to a football team that played to a game plan.

The research centre would consist of the people behind the scenes who worked out the strategies and developed ways of improving the game plan.

One of the first projects will be to study the reasons that rural and indigenous women with gynaecological cancer have a worse outcome than others.

The first main fundraising venture for the centre held last month raised \$135,000, including \$50,000 from the McCusker Charitable Foundation.

Another \$365,000 is being sought to achieve the centre's target.

Anyone interested in making a donation can go to wrlf.com.au and follow the link to Raising funds for a new Gynaecologic Cancer Research Centre.



Fundraiser: Fai Wong, owner of the Grand Palace restaurant; Professor John Hewnam, executive director of the Women and Infants Research Foundation; WA Governor Malcolm McCusker; his wife, Tonya McCusker, who is patron of the Women and Infants Research Foundation; and Professor Yee Leung.

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GOLD STANDARD HAIR RESTORATION

Leading hair restoration physician Doctor Jennifer Martinick said to be cautious about marketing plays suggesting quick-fix solutions for hair removal and to only trust established 'gold standard' hair replacement surgery.

According to Dr Martinick, who is President of the International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery (ISHRS), some promotions claim a surgical technique known as Follicular Unit Extraction (FUE) results in faster hair growth, fewer post-surgery stitches and a faster recovery phase.

But Dr Martinick said FUE was not, as suggested, superior to the more established and widely used ISHRS 'gold standard' surgical technique, Follicular Unit Transplantation (FUT).

FUT is carried out by removing a strip of donor hairs that are microscopically dissected, resulting in a higher survival rate and healthier hair growth after surgery of the transplanted follicles compared to FUE, according to Dr Martinick.

"If a physician suggests one method offers a panacea for hair loss in every person then exercise caution," Dr Martinick said. "A patient must be counselled on a solution that is right for them."

VASECTOMY REVERSAL IS POSSIBLE

About one per cent of men who undergo vasectomy wish to have more children and for most is because they have changed partners, rather than having had a change of heart.

Fortunately it is possible to successfully surgically reverse vasectomy in the majority.

According to leading reproductive microsurgeon at Hollywood Private Hospital, Dr Robert Woolcott, for the average man undergoing vasectomy reversal, technical success is achieved in greater than 90 per cent of cases and pregnancy between 50 and 80 per cent, depending on the age of the partner.

"The most important influences on the success of vasectomy reversal are the experience and microsurgical skill of the surgeon," Dr Woolcott said.

Dr Woolcott's surgical team use state-of-the-art techniques to maximise success, including a high-powered operating microscope and multi-layered microsurgical methods ensuring accuracy.

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