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A LIGHT therapy used to treat skin cancer and sun spots is emerging as a promising treatment for reaching cancer cells deep in the body, with Australian researchers finding the first evidence of its ability to kill ovarian tumours.

New research from the Hudson Institute of Medical Research in Melbourne has found that a new type of treatment called photodynamic light therapy is able to dramatically shrink ovarian cancers in mice, while sparing the surrounding healthy tissue.

The treatment works by giving the patient a drug containing light-sensitive compounds. These compounds sit inert in the cancer cells until a specific wavelength of light is shined on them, causing a reaction in the tumour.

The tests conducted in mice – using a new type of the light therapy called Photosoft Technology developed by Australian company Invion – saw it able to halve the size of ovarian tumours by three weeks. It is believed the treatment works in two ways – by triggering instant cell death and by rallying the immune system to continue attacking the cancer.