

# Melbourne researchers get backing for potential ovarian cancer treatment

September 10, 2020

Melbourne researchers developing a potential new treatment for ovarian cancer have attracted investment that will support its progression through early testing and into clinical trials.

Researchers at the Melbourne-based Hudson Institute of Medical Research have partnered with international investor Morningside Ventures to launch a spin-off company, Epsila Bio, to develop and commercialise the treatment.

The potential treatment is based on findings led by Hudson Institute researchers that the presence of a cytokine, interferon epsilon, in the female reproductive tract activates the body's immune response to infections and has a similar immune response to cancer.

Hudson Institute chief commercialisation officer, Rob Merriel, said, "There's a huge unmet need for a breakthrough ovarian cancer treatment. This is a silent disease which is often asymptomatic, and therefore discovered too late when it has already spread extensively. Current disease management is ultimately limited by the development of chemotherapy resistance."

CEO of Epsila Bio, Dr Ronnie Farquhar, said, "Epsila Bio will leverage Morningside's expertise and financial wherewithal to translate Hudson Institute's outstanding research into a novel cancer therapeutic with meaningful patient benefit and large commercial market opportunity. The project will greatly be enabled by our strong relationships with Hudson Institute researchers."

# Bupa launches new mental health partnership for Qld customers

September 10, 2020

Bupa has announced that its Queensland-based customers living with mental illness now have access to a range of new out-of-hospital care options.

The company has announced a new partnership with leading community-managed specialist mental health service provider, Mind Australia.

The Mind Care Choices program is delivered as an outreach model of care that can be accessed at a clinic, in an individual's own home, over the phone or via video conference with no out-of-pocket costs.

Bupa said it established this partnership recognising that 87 per cent of its customers would prefer to receive mental health care in the community or the comfort of their own home.

It said research suggests a 'balanced care' model that includes community-based mental health support services as a complement to hospital care, can help improve continuity of care, adherence to treatment and quality of life.

According to Nirasha Parsotam, Bupa's head of Health System Strategy and Integration, "We believe this service meets the real demand for alternatives to the traditional psychiatrist led, hospital-based model of care with the ultimate goal of helping patients live happy and fulfilling lives in the community.

"We are extremely pleased to offer our Queensland customers access to this program which is already delivering promising results."

Since the QLD pilot started in January this year, 52 members have enrolled in the program and 17 have been discharged back to the management of their GP.

Esther Dancewicz, occupational therapist at Mind Australia, said from a clinical perspective the program focuses on promoting the right words, actions, and thoughts to be incorporated into people's lives.

"It's all about supporting patients and giving them the power to see their lives as worthy of having goals – daily goals, weekly goals, five-year goals, family goals, career goals, better life goals.

"These goals and ongoing community integration give them the assurance that their life is unique, valued, and worthy of being shared with the world," said Ms Dancewicz.

The program is available to eligible Bupa customers residing in the South East QLD local government areas of City of Brisbane, Ipswich City, Logan City, Redland City and the City of Gold Coast.

## **RACGP announces the election of its new president**

September 10, 2020

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) has announced the election of Dr Karen Price as its new president.

The organisation said Dr Price's term will take effect from the close of its Annual General Meeting on 30 November 2020.

Dr Price will succeed Associate Professor Ayman Shenouda, who assumed the role of acting president following the death of the late Dr Harry Nespolon. Dr Nespolon passed away in July following a nine-month battle with pancreatic cancer.

RACGP board chair Christine Nixon said that she looked forward to working with Dr Price when she officially assumes the role later this year.

"The RACGP has many talented and determined GP members delivering the highest quality of patient care and our new President comes with a strong track record of representing their interests and fighting for them," said Ms Nixon.

"The Board looks forward to working alongside Dr Price from November."

"The leadership roles I have undertaken mean that I have my finger on the pulse of what issues matter to GPs in communities across Australia," said Dr Price.

"I want to extend that knowledge even further and as President my priority will be to improve engagement with members. It doesn't matter if you work in a major city or if you are the sole doctor in a small town – I want to hear what you have to say and what I can do to help you.

"I plan to meet regularly with groups of GPs in all corners of the country. In the months ahead, these will have to be video meetings rather than face-to-face interactions, but the most important thing will be explaining my agenda as President and listening to the insights of GPs.

"I will draw on my experience in establishing a platform for GPs, as well as my near completion of a PhD on peer connection, to generate a more open and inclusive college that values member engagement."

Dr Price said she plans to "hit the ground running".

"I will work closely with the executive, the CEO Dr Matthew Miles and Board members to ensure the RACGP is not left behind.

“I look forward to working closely with Acting President Associate Professor Ayman Shenouda in the important handover period. I would like to personally commend Dr Shenouda’s outstanding contributions during a very difficult year – he has my deepest respect.

“We must be ambitious, speak up for our members and clearly articulate what we want. Heading into 2021, I plan to reassert the role of general practice and adopt a ‘GPs first’ approach when meeting with the nation’s health leaders.

“I also believe we need to collaborate with other healthcare groups to provide a united force in our dealings with Government. We will not agree on everything but, where possible, we can and should work together.”

Dr Price said that general practice has been under-funded and underestimated for too long.

“We know that primary care is the best available system to drive accessible quality care to all Australians no matter where they live, so we need to put general practice back on a sustainable funding footing,” said Dr Price.

“We must fight hard to get the resources we need to care for our patients and involve them in that fight for their social contract of health, and that includes working with national patient organisations.

“We are living in uncertain times, but there is reason for hope. The bushfires and the pandemic have demonstrated once again how vital primary care is when health crises strike and as President I will seize all opportunities for meaningful advocacy.”