

Research leading the way for 2025



A word from the CEO

Happy New Year, I trust it has got off to a good start for you.

We are getting very excited as our inaugural conference, **In Pursuit 2025**, looms closer. We have some of the best international and local minds attending, giving us insights into the cutting-edge research, the important role engineering and biotech industries play in building a cancer-free future, as well as outlining the importance of investment.

Investing in research is well known for the medical and societal benefits it brings, but few people realise that it also brings huge benefits to the economy. Research shows that for every **\$1 spent on cancer research, \$2.80 is returned to the economy.**

We have designed our conference to highlight those investment opportunities and to showcase those breakthroughs that are on the verge of saving or improving the lives of many New Zealanders.

There's also a free public event running on **Wednesday 5th March** at the Rolleston Lecture Theatre in Christchurch, where the remarkable work of our Cancer Society funded researchers will be on display.

Featured in this newsletter is an interview with one of the keynote speakers, Professor Parry Guilford. It is certainly an exciting time to be involved in this field.

You can find more information about In Pursuit 2025 at cancerconference.co.nz We'd love to see you there.

I look forward to connecting with you during 2025 and sharing the work we are doing to create a future free of cancer.

Nic Coom | CEO



Research making cancer a manageable disease

Technology and new drugs targeting Stage 4 cancers are getting good traction for cancer sufferers, thanks to the work being done by researchers, including **Professor Parry Guilford**, Director of the Centre for Translational Cancer Research and Research Director of Pacific Edge Biotechnology.



Professor Parry Guilford

The new drugs, called **Antibody Drug Coagulates (ADCs)**, have been developed through cutting edge research and are more targeted and appropriate treatments for cancer. And they are just one of many exciting breakthroughs that have changed the cancer environment.

Parry says, **"ADCs are very useful for people with advanced cancer. They allow us to target the tumour directly."**

"ADCs would be too toxic to take, but if you take it straight to the tumour, it avoids damaging the surrounding healthy tissue."

Continued on reverse 

6th - 7th March
2025

Te Pae Conference
Centre Ōtautahi
Christchurch

In Pursuit 
of Cancer Research
& Innovation
Breakthroughs



Parry said more breakthroughs in understanding cancer had been discovered over the past 20-30 years.

“We started looking at the immune system and found some immune cells are good and some are bad, but since the Human Genome Project was completed, we were able to sequence the DNA of

tumours. That was the first time we could see what was wrong on the inside.”

“Internationally, we (researchers) have been working together, and we now have DNA databases on thousands of cancers.”

Parry said through research more understanding would occur, and

new drugs would evolve and the outlook for patients would continue to improve.

“Of course, early detection is the most important thing and always will be. People need to be actively involved in their health, undergo screening and prevent cancer where possible.”

Pancreatic cancer tissue donated for the greater good

Recovering from pancreatic cancer, Vicki Smith had the opportunity to donate tissue from her tumour, knowing it could lead to better outcomes for other people suffering from the same disease.

Donating the tissue to the Southern Cancer Society's Tissue Bank in Christchurch was a no-brainer for Vicki.

“Mum had this cancer and so did one of my cousins, so I thought what I could do for my family,” says Vicki.

Meeting Tissue Bank Curator, **Helen Morrin**, to explain what happens when tissue is donated was enlightening for Vicki.

“Donating tissue is easy. It supports the research that might lead to a cure or medications that treat pancreatic cancer. It could save the life of a family member.”

Pancreatic tissue samples can be a rare commodity because of the need for living tissue and the rapidity pancreatic cancer can take hold but one sample of tissue can be used multiple times.



Helen Morrin with Vicki Smith.



Q&A with Dr Roland Meyer

How did you navigate the role of both patient and doctor?

It is difficult not to try to “drive the bus” when being the doctor-patient. I have been blessed by the fact that all the health professionals have listened if I raised issues.

What insights can you share from other patients struggling to navigate the health system?

Make yourself heard if there seem to be obstacles and barriers when trying to get clarity about what the diagnosis is, what it actually means, what the prognosis and the treatment options are.

What advice would you give to someone who has just been diagnosed with cancer?

Get certainty about the stage of the cancer and then be clear of what options there are. Ask questions and ask to receive copies of your doctor's letters. Definitely contact the Southern Cancer Society for support.

What are the questions you would recommend asking your own doctor?

What stage is the cancer, have all the necessary tests and investigations been completed? What are the different treatment options and why those particular ones? Can there be a “cure”? Ask your doctor to explain the “prognosis” in plain English.

Is there anything you would recommend preparing for your specialist appointments?

Make a list of questions, never feel inhibited to ask. Always try to have a “second set of ears”, somebody you trust who can listen, question, help to navigate in this often so-very-confusing journey.

Are you or someone you know going through their cancer journey at the moment?



Get the support and information you need at our brand new Online Support Centre

www.southerncancersupport.org.nz