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MEDIA RELEASE

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Community fundraising injects new hope into ovarian cancer research as Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation announces \$2.4 million in new funding

- Today, the Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation (OCRF) announces **three major grants totalling nearly \$2.1 million** to promising Australian-led ovarian cancer research.
- An additional **\$300k in co-funding to collaborative projects and supporting vital tissue banks** brings the total to \$2.4 million in new funding.
- Ovarian cancer is the most lethal reproductive disease with a heartbreaking five-year survival rate of just 49 per cent
- Ovarian cancer also languishes as one of the most underfunded cancers. These two facts are inextricably linked.
- The OCRF community is determined to change this. OCRF is the largest independent funder of ovarian cancer research in Australia, second only to the Commonwealth.
- OCRF funds are 100% raised by the Australian community
- Funding announced today enables three Australian research teams to investigate a new diagnostic approach and two potentially life-saving treatment options.

Melbourne, AUS - Today, three ovarian cancer research institutions have received significant funding from the [Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation](#) (OCRF) through their annual National Research Grants Scheme.

Totalling over \$2 million, the grants will enable Australian researchers to investigate solutions across ovarian cancer diagnostics and treatment, with the aim to improve patient outcomes today and long-term survival rates.

With an additional \$300k to be distributed in co-funding to collaborative research projects and supporting vital tissue banks, the OCRF has committed **\$2.4 million in new funding** to ovarian cancer research, confirming the organisation's position as the leading independent funder of ovarian cancer research in the country.

OCRF CEO Robin Penty emphasised the correlation between research and boosting survival rates:

“Ovarian cancer is the most lethal reproductive cancer, regardless of gender,” she said. “It’s estimated we’ll see over 1,800 new cases in Australia this year, and less than half of those patients will be alive in five years’ time,” she explains.

“These patients will receive very similar treatments to those my grandmother received four decades ago. We need genuine step-change, and funding innovative research is the only way to achieve that.”

Towards early diagnosis and new treatments

The three research projects, independently reviewed by the OCRF’s International Scientific Advisory Committee and Consumer Representative Panel, will enable research into both diagnostics and treatments of the disease.

Professor Carlos Salomon Gallo from The University of Queensland is leading a large-scale collaboration with Australian hospitals and researchers.

The team will determine how accurately and early his diagnostic test can distinguish ovarian cancer from other cancerous and benign conditions, such as endometriosis. The project aims to collate data that can validate whether the test can progress to clinical trials.

To date, ovarian cancer has not been as responsive to immunotherapies as other cancers. OCRF funding will allow Professor Kristen Radford, of Mater Research and UQ, to develop the foundations of a vaccine targeting ovarian cancer.

The aim, for now, is to use this vaccine for as an improved treatment rather than prevention for ovarian cancer. Her approach will determine how the immune system can be activated, training the body to help itself against ovarian cancer.

One of the challenges to effectively treating ovarian cancer is that it encompasses over 30 different disease types that don’t all respond effectively to chemotherapy and standard care treatments available.

Dr Dane Cheasley, of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and the University of Melbourne, has screened thousands of Therapeutic Goods Administration approved drugs.

With this grant his team will determine which combination of drugs can most effectively, and with the least side effects, treat a rarer subtype of ovarian cancer: low grade serous.

OCRF funds are 100% raised by the Australian community: dedicated corporate partners as well as mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, sons and daughters, other family and friends, stepping up to raise urgently needed money for this important cause.

OCRF recently announced new fundraising partnerships with the Mother’s Day Classic, which will now raise funds for both breast cancer and ovarian cancer, and Darryl Lea which has produced a special Easter egg. In addition, OCRF recently joined with the Australia and New Zealand Gynaecological Oncology Group and Ovarian Cancer Australia to sign a statement of collaborative

intent. Acknowledging the criticality of collaboration and partnerships, Ms Robin Penty, CEO of OCRF said,

“No single ovarian cancer researcher and no one organisation can make these huge leaps for patients with ovarian cancer on their own. That’s why the OCRF is a strong voice for collective action — listening to, working with, and advocating alongside the sector and our community. We’re stronger together.”

-ENDS-

BACKGROUND:

Established in 2000, the OCRF is Australia’s leading independent funder of ovarian cancer research in Australia. Our experts ensure that we fund the research that will have the greatest impact on the largest number of women, girls, and their families.

OCRF-funded research helps those living with ovarian cancer today – and will save the lives of loved ones tomorrow and into the future. The only way to improve survival rates of this deadly disease is to significantly boost dedicated research funding and awareness-raising. This requires collective effort and advocacy across government, community, corporate, and philanthropic Australia.

In Australia during 2023 it’s estimated that 1,054 people died of ovarian cancer and another 1,786 were diagnosed¹.

AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW:

Professor Carlos Salomon Gallo - ovarian cancer diagnostic test, lead investigator

Director, UQ Centre for Extracellular Vesicle Nanomedicine

Leader of the Translational Extracellular Vesicles in Obstetrics and Gynae-Oncology Group at The University of Queensland’s Centre for Clinical Research

Professor Kristen Radford – ovarian cancer vaccination, lead investigator

Mater Research, Queensland

Dr Dane Cheasley – treatment targeting low grade serous ovarian cancer, lead investigator

Cancer Evolution and Metastasis Program, The Sir Peter MacCallum Department of Oncology, Melbourne

Robin Penty, Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation CEO

Interviews with patients and ovarian cancer ambassadors can also be conducted upon request.

¹ Cancer Australia: <https://www.canceraustralia.gov.au/cancer-types/ovarian-cancer/statistics>

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