



Cancer Society of New Zealand  
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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Anti-cancer Gene Therapy Among New Medical Research Funded by the Cancer Society of New Zealand**

The Cancer Society of New Zealand has announced it will fund \$1million in ground-breaking medical research in 2007, the most it has ever awarded in a year, through its research grants programme.

The Cancer Society is backing a number of prominent New Zealand medical researchers to investigate the causes and treatments of different forms of cancer, including brain tumours, prostate, and breast cancer.

Cancer Society chief executive, Dalton Kelly, says: “It is thanks to the generosity of New Zealanders that we are able to support this potentially life-saving research, which will ensure we continue to make real progress in the detection and treatment of cancer.”

The grant awards follow a rigorous round of assessments by the Cancer Society’s National Scientific Advisory Committee and Board, including Associate Professor Chris Atkinson, the charity’s medical director. He says:

“These important research projects will ensure New Zealand continues to contribute to global knowledge and expertise on the many different forms of cancer. We were impressed by the quality of this year’s applications, and that some of New Zealand’s best research teams will lead the projects.

“We are excited by the potential outcomes and hope the shared results will ultimately enable the medical profession to detect and treat people more effectively.”

Among the research grants announced by the organisation today is a study led by Dr David Ackerley, which looks to identify new enzymes that could be useful in anti-cancer gene therapy. The project involves a collaboration of two leading research teams from Wellington and Auckland over the next three years.

Dr Ian Hermans, from the Malaghan Institute of Medical Research in Wellington, was awarded funding for a three year investigation into a new treatment for recurrent glioblastoma, the commonest brain cancer in adults.

Wellington School of Medicine Professor, David Lamb, also received further funding for an Australian and New Zealand prostate cancer trial, which seeks to identify how long it is safe to use hormone therapy in the treatment of prostate cancer, and whether any side effects of treatment can be reduced.

The Cancer Society acknowledged the major effort involved on the part of the unsuccessful applicants. Professor Atkinson adds:

“It’s always difficult to turn people down, however we hope that those teams who didn’t make it through this year will submit applications in 2008.”

The Cancer Society has also offered a number of training scholarships. They include Mr Russell Hewit (Victoria University of Wellington), Miss Wing Yee Lo and Dr Xiaobin Zhan (University of Auckland).

The Cancer Society of New Zealand is the leading charity dedicated to reducing the incidence of cancer and ensuring the best cancer care for everyone in New Zealand.

**- Ends -**

**Notes to Editor**

A full summary of successful grants and scholarships can be viewed at:

<http://www.cancernz.org.nz/Research/Grants2007>

For more information or to set up an interview with Chris Atkinson, please contact Dawn Neville, National Communications Manager for the Cancer Society of New Zealand, on Tel: (04) 494 7270 / Mob: 027 4444 150, or email [dawn.neville@cancer.org.nz](mailto:dawn.neville@cancer.org.nz).