



Media release

Wednesday 19 August 2020

Jim and Shirley Richards leave legacy for cancer research

- *Researchers at the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute has received \$80,000 from the Jim and Shirley Richards Trust to support important research into the detection of proteins on cancer cells that invade the immune system.*

Jim and Shirley Richards were ordinary citizens who have left an extraordinary legacy. A charitable trust established in their name has donated \$80,000 to the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute to assist in funding a project for the Detection of Novel Proteins on Cancer Cells that evade the immune system.

Jim died in the early 2000's and Shirley late 2019. Under Shirley's Will she provided for a discretionary charitable trust to be set up called the Jim and Shirley Richards trust, and the purpose of the trust was for cancer treatment or research within the Ballarat area.

The couple lived in Wendouree, and Jim worked for many years for Peter Amor Motors and Shirley worked at the home for the blind. The couple had no children and wished to use the funds they had accumulated over their lifetime to give back to their local community. Developments in cancer research and treatment were close to the couple's heart, as Jim suffered from throat cancer, and Shirley's sister, breast cancer.

The Trustee of the discretionary trust is Andrew Byrne of BJT Legal, said "It is very pleasing to announce that a donation of \$80,000.00 from the Trust has been given to Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute to help develop research in Ballarat."

Professor George Kannourakis, Institute Director, explains that "Cancer is thought to arise when mutations occur in normal cells leading to uncontrolled growth and spread throughout the body. The immune system is complex and typically destroys any mutated cell from the body. Cancer cells are clever and develop proteins on their cell surface that creates a "fog" around them so that immune cells cannot "see" them, hence evading the immune system."

The donation goes to supporting a key project at the Institute, enabled by an important group of patient samples collected over the last 22 years from over 150 patients Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia (CLL). These samples offer a potential gateway to developing a breakthrough in developing antibodies to assist in the treatment of cancer.

"Many of the CLL patients do not have symptoms or signs of disease, despite some patients having up to 1kg of tumour load in their body. I have been fascinated by these well patients for many years and they have agreed to donating blood samples to research over many years, in some cases over 20 years. Some of these patients have progressed to disease- enlarged lymph nodes, liver, spleen and a drop in their normal blood counts. This has provided our researchers with the unique asset of stored

sequential samples in liquid nitrogen to compare the proteins “fog” on the leukaemic cell surfaces before and after they progress to disease .We are looking for proteins that are present when the immune system is not able to control the cancer, hence leading to a disease. Our team will use new technology to identify these proteins and a catalogue of antibodies that could dramatically add to the current immunotherapy treatment options for cancer patients” said Professor Kannourakis.

The work will be done by FECRI postdoctoral research fellow Dr Dilys Leung. A previous grant from the Jim and Shirley Richards Trust was received to initiate this study.

FECRI currently has 8 PhD students from Federation University and 13 senior scientific staff. The program is community funded and the only cancer research Institute in regional Australia. Other key projects being conducted at the Institute are:

- Ovarian cancer
- Breast cancer
- Immunology
- Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia
- Renal cancer

Photo opportunity:

Andrew Byrne- Trust Trustee, Professor George Kannourakis- Institute Director, and Dr Dilys Leung- Post Doctorate Researcher, will be available.

Date: Friday 21 August

Time: 2pm

Where: Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute

Phone interviews and further information regarding this grant can also be arranged.

File photos of Jim and Shirley Richards and Dr Dilys Leung are available at:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_p9M-KG1p6Xl8PKlujRtIwVpcR12dvlT?usp=sharing

All media enquiries, please contact Sarah Stapleton- Marketing and Fundraising Manager at FECRI on 0475 383 687 or sarah@fecri.org.au.

Please tag the Institute on all social media using @fionaelseycr