



FIONA ELSEY
CANCER RESEARCH INSTITUTE
fighting cancer through research

PATRON: PRIMROSE LADY POTTER, AC

Media release

22 June 2023

Renowned specialist breast surgeon collaborates with the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute

- *Melbourne specialist breast surgeon Dr Nicole Yap has joined the research team of the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute as a Collaborating Clinician.*
- *The aim of the collaboration is to shine a light on and clinically support the institute's work into Triple negative breast cancer to the broader community outside Ballarat.*

Ballarat's Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute has announced that renowned Melbourne specialist breast surgeon, Dr Nicole Yap, will work with the Breast cancer research group as a Collaborating Clinician in metropolitan Melbourne. Through this collaboration, Dr Yap will bring her patients perspective to the work and highlight the groups research of to a wider audience.

Dr Nicole Yap is a Specialist Breast Surgeon and founding director of Australian Breast Care Centre (ABCC). Dr Yap treats both the cancer and the cosmetic outcome at the same oncoplastic surgery, maintaining or possibly improving the aesthetic/cosmetic outcome. Dr Yap is involved with multiple associations including deputy chair of RACS, AMA councillor, President Chinese Medical Association of Victoria, Vice President of Medical Legal Society Victoria and sits on the board of Pink Hope.

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers in women with one million cases of breast cancer diagnosed around the world each year. Triple-negative breast cancers account for 10%–20% of breast cancers and have been reported to be more aggressive and associated with poorer survival than other subtypes of breast cancers. Notably, the triple-negative subtype of breast cancer is encountered more often in pregnancy and has an aggressive clinical course.

The breast cancer researchers at the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute are focused on this aggressive subtype of breast cancer.

In world first work, the group have reported the behaviour and function of a pregnancy associated plasma protein (PAPPA), that is highly found in aggressive triple-negative breast cancers. High PAPPA concentrations are generally detected in blood of pregnant women. However, in breast cancer patients, researchers found that an abnormal overexpression of PAPPA negatively affects survival rates and increases the risk of the cancer recurring. The research sought to understand its functional consequences, and findings revealed that PAPPA plays an important role in regulating key cell motility networks in breast cancers.

Dr Nicole Yap said of the appointment "As the first Metropolitan based breast surgeon to be accepted as a collaborating clinician, I am honoured to officially support this important research and I encourage other breast cancer surgeons to follow in my footsteps to help bring more patient perspectives and expose the research to a wider audience."

“I have chosen to donate my resources to the FECRI based on their current studies which align with my charity Australian Breast Care Centre. Triple negative breast cancer is one of the most aggressive breast cancers and tends to be associated with women under the age of 50 and certain genetic mutations.” Said Dr Yap.

Professor George Kannourakis, Director of the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute said “We are fortunate to have Dr Yap support of our Breast cancer group. We are grateful for her interest in our work here in Ballarat and look forward to working with her.”

The Ballarat based Institute currently has 3 PhD students and 15 staff.

“As a community funded organisation, the Institute relies on the generous support of donors to continue and grow. We are proud to be Australia’s only regionally based cancer research facility, based in Ballarat. We are an example that internationally recognised research can be performed outside of the metropolitan centres.” said Professor Kannourakis

Recent research results from FECRI include:

- Identification of proteins involved in chemo resistance in Ovarian cancer that can potentially be used as targets to prevent progression and circumvent chemoresistance in patients.
- World first work in describing the behaviour and function of a pregnancy associated plasma protein (PAPPA), in triple negative breast cancer. This research has led to understanding the mechanism for progression of cancer during pregnancy.
- Bowel cancer research team reported discovery on a subset of immune cells in the bowel that can misbehave and release chemical messengers that promote cancer and inhibit other immune cells.
- Identification of a new immune cell subset in histiocytic disorders.

Media Enquires:

For all interview requests with Dr Nicole Yap, please contact:

Belinda Visser, Bella PR, e. belinda@bellapr.com.au or ph. 0431 2741 69

For all FECRI related requests, please contact:

Sarah Stapleton, e. sarah@fecri.org.au or ph. 0475 383 687