



Media release

Friday 24 May 2024

Irene's memory to make a difference to research.

A donation to support cancer research at the Ballarat based, Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute, has seen the establishment of a Fellowship, named in honour of the late Irene Tellefson.

Irene Tellefson of Mildura was diagnosed with cancer in 2020 and received treatment in Ballarat. During her treatment, she, and her husband Gavan, became aware and interested in the work of the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute.

Irene was adamant that she would like to support research to improve treatment and outcomes for patients. Irene passed away in late 2022.

Today, Professor George Kannourakis, Institute Director, will announce the establishment of the Irene Tellefson Cancer Research Fellowship. The inaugural recipient of the Fellowship will be Dr Arpita Poddar.

Dr Poddar is an interdisciplinary researcher, who works on the interface of material science, biology and with a focus on nanoparticles being applied as a treatment delivery system across varying cancer types. The announced Fellowship will support the development of research into utilising and harvesting the power of nanoparticle delivery systems in cancer treatment, with reference to triple negative Breast cancer.

The work will expand on findings from the Ballarat based research group, that have already shown in the lab the great potential of this system for Prostate and Cervical cancers. Utilising nanoparticles, drugs and treatments can be carried directly into cancer tissues and at a cellular level, to target the cancer and leave the healthy cells alone.

It is hoped that this exploratory research will be a tool to add to the treatment of a broad range of cancers in the future.

Quote attributable to Gavan Tellefson on the announcement of the Irene Tellefson Cancer Research Fellowship, in memory of his late wife Irene.

“During the difficult time of Irene’s illness, and the exemplary treatment and care that she was receiving from Professor George Kannourakis, we became aware of the Fiona Elsey Research Institute. We were astonished to discover that the research program is funded solely by community support.

Irene resolved very quickly that she wanted to address that situation in some way. The donation to the Institute has been made in accordance with Irene’s clear wishes. She had the most profound respect and admiration for George, and she would be proud that this Fellowship is created in her name.”

Quote attributable to Research Fellow, Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute, Dr Arpita Poddar.

“This is a wonderful opportunity to have this funding to support my research. What we have here at FECRI is unique across multiple research projects, with clinical knowledge and patient samples.

The fellowship supports work that is at a very exciting intersection that can correctly guide chemical synthesis and bio application of nanoparticle delivery systems to benefit cancer patients. I am honoured to be named the Irene Tellefson Cancer Research Fellow to continue this work.”

Quote attributable to Honorary Director for the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute, Professor George Kannourakis.

“We are very grateful to the Tellefson family for the establishment of the Irene Tellefson Cancer Research Fellowship. This Fellowship will fund important and exciting work into the use of nanoparticles in cancer treatment delivery.

“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.”

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.

Announcement and Photo opportunity:

Friday 24 May, 10:30am
Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute
106-110 Lydiard Street (Sth), Ballarat.

In attendance: Irene Tellefson Cancer Research Fellow- Dr Arpita Poddar,
Professor George Kannourakis- Institute Director, Gavan Tellefson and family.

Media Enquires:

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