

## ***Pancreatic cancer – Succumbs to Thunder God Vine***

### **Professor Ashok Saluja - ASMR Medallist 2015 In Melbourne today!**

**WHO:** Professor Ashok Saluja, ASMR Medalist 2015  
**WHAT:** ASMR Medical Research Week® Dinner  
**WHERE:** La Trobe Ballroom, Sofitel on Collins  
**WHEN:** June 4, 2015, 7:30pm

Professor Ashok Saluja from the University of Minnesota is a man on a mission – **to cure pancreatic cancer!**

***This disease kills five Australians each day, and has recently claimed the lives of high-profile personalities such as Apple founder Steve Jobs and respected Australian journalist Peter Harvey***

As a result of sustained government funding for over 30 years, Prof. Saluja has conducted breakthrough research into a treatment for pancreatic cancer, recently culminating in the development of a novel drug, *Minnelide* (based on an extract from the Thunder God vine or *Tripterygium wilfordii*). This drug is showing extraordinary promise, shrinking tumours in 70% of patients in a clinical trial. A striking result given current treatments for pancreatic cancer at best only slow tumour growth and prolong survival for no more than 4 months.

Despite this remarkable progress, the journey from bench to bedside for this particular discovery has not been without obstacles. A passionate and dedicated scientist, Saluja has the courage of his convictions, personally investing to ensure this discovery could move into clinical trials.

Saluja explains, “*if you think research is expensive, try disease. Over \$3.5 billion is spent on caring for patients with pancreatic cancer, yet this does not increase survival. Imagine if only a fraction of this health care cost was invested into research for a cure.*” Saluja believes that, in an ideal world, industry has a role to play: “*Wouldn’t it be nice if the pharma industry invested 2% of their revenue to support basic research? After all, most of their revenue generated is based on basic research discoveries*”

**The Winner of the 2015 Commonwealth Health Minister’s Award for Health and Medical Research will also be announced at the dinner.**

Editor’s Note: Interview and photo opportunities  
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