

## VICTORIA'S YOUNG RESEARCHERS MAKE SIGNIFICANT HEADWAY IN DISEASE TREATMENTS

### STAMPING OUT RESISTANT OVARIAN CANCER CELLS

Epithelial ovarian cancer kills 900 Australian women every year, and it's the 5th most frequent cause of death in women world-wide. These distressing statistics are due to the asymptomatic nature of the cancer, with patients usually presenting at a late stage when the disease has already metastasized. A major hurdle in the clinical management of ovarian cancer patients is chemotherapy resistance. However it is not clear why some tumour cells have resistance to current chemotherapy treatments.

*Ardian Latifi*, from the *Women's Cancer Research Centre*, is investigating novel approaches to sensitise the residual tumours which survive the current treatment regimes, and is using his newly found knowledge that these tough tumour cells have a different cellular make-up to those that get killed.

### DOES CAFFEINE IN SUGARY DRINKS INCREASE YOUR FOOD CRAVINGS?

Over the past 30 years, both the consumption of sugar sweetened beverages and the rates of obesity have risen significantly. These findings raise the question many in the public have probably asked, is there a direct link between sugar sweetened beverages and obesity? There has already been a call for a reduction in sugar sweetened beverages, particularly for children and adolescents. Caffeine is a common additive to sugar sweetened beverages, despite being identified as increasing snacking consumption.

*Penelope Oliver*, from *Deakin University*, is seeking further evidence to better understand the influence of caffeine in these drinks on snack food consumption and energy intake. She will ask volunteers to drink sugar sweetened beverages containing differing amounts of caffeine, and will allow them to consume as much snack food as they desire... sounds like a good time to be a human guinea pig!

### NEW DNA SIGNATURES SHINES LIGHT ON CHILD KILLER

Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL) is the most prevalent form of paediatric cancer. Whilst approximately 80% of children diagnosed with ALL thankfully have a positive outcome, 20% of patients face the problem of relapse. What determines the unfortunate 20% group of patients still remains largely unknown. ALL exhibits disruptions in gene expression, which is a feature common to all cancers. *Zac Chatterton* from the *Murdoch Childrens Research Institute*, is studying a particular type of gene expression influence, known as DNA methylation. He has determined distinct gene signatures which associate with ALL and that may help explain the variability in individual treatment responsiveness and long-term outcome, whilst also providing novel diagnostic and treatment targets.

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## HOW TO GET KIDS TO EAT MORE VEGIES??

About 97% of children aged from 4 to 13 years eat less than the recommended dietary intake of 2 to 4 serves of vegetables per day. This puts them at risk of diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes later in life. In children the perceived taste-reward for vegetables is low due to the disliked bitter-tasting compounds many of them contain, hence them not wanting to spend too much time eating them. *Deakin University's Jimmy Cahyadi* is investigating strategies to try to get children to *willingly* eat more vegetables – will this see the end of parents having to serve up spaghetti bolognese with lots of “hidden” vegetables?

### NUTS 'N' GUTS – WHY DO PEANUTS CAUSE ALLERGIES?

A food allergy epidemic has continued to raise over the past few decades, with peanuts the highest cause of anaphylactic deaths after ingestion of a food allergen. The increasing occurrence of sensitivity to certain foods remains to be identified. In particular, how the allergen interacts with tissues in the body remains elusive. *Dwan Price*, from *Deakin University* is researching the way that proteins from peanuts cross the lining of the intestine, adding to the understanding of why these proteins are such potent allergens and providing insights into possible preventative measures.

## Photo and Interview Opportunities

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