



Australian Pancreatic Cancer Genome Initiative

At the Garvan Institute of Medical Research

NEWSLETTER

Jan 2012

Dear APGI Participants and Families,

We are writing to thank you again for your continued partnership with the APGI and to update you on our research. Our research relies on your cooperation and generosity as our participants and APGI community members.

The APGI is continuing to work hard with researchers around Australia and the world, to help improve the situation of pancreatic cancer treatment. 2011 has brought great progress for our team. We now have 308 participants and our sequencing effort has armed us with the initial 'blueprint' of pancreatic cancer. This year is therefore looking to be one of great promise and opportunity. We hope you find this newsletter informative and we welcome your feedback.

Please write to us if you would like to change any of your details, would like to receive an email version of the newsletter or would like to be taken off our mailing list. You can find our contact details below.

Once again, thank you for your support.

Prof. Andrew Biankin

On behalf of the APGI research team.

Contact

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Research Update

The initial 'blueprint' of pancreatic cancer from the analysis of the first 100 samples has opened up new research opportunities and allowed more APGI projects to get underway. We have now begun recruiting for the Australian Familial Pancreatic Cancer Cohort (AFPACC). In this cohort we are aiming to unravel the hereditary connection that is evident in approximately 10% of pancreatic cancer. Additionally, our Circulating DNA Project is about to start recruiting, which is investigating if tumour DNA can be detected by a simple blood test and used as an indicator for response to treatment.

The end of 2011 was also a time of great encouragement for our research team as the community showed their support through multiple fundraising events. Individuals who have had loved ones affected by pancreatic cancer have rallied around our research, organising events and running marathons in support! The Avner Nahmani Foundation's Put Your Foot Down Walk helped raise awareness and funds for pancreatic cancer research in Hobart and Sydney. In Melbourne, Jane Hemstritch rallied the formidable Team Phil to participate in the Run Melbourne event in memory of her husband, Phil Hermstritch, who lost the battle with pancreatic cancer in 2010. We'd like to say a special thank you to Jane, who personally ran the half marathon and, with Team Phil, has raised more than \$79,000 for the APGI. Furthermore, November was Pancreatic Cancer Awareness month, which saw pancreatic cancer supported worldwide.

We are excited to report our new and improved website is now up and running. It is proving to be an invaluable resource for those interested in finding out more about pancreatic cancer, our research, news and upcoming events. Further details are outlined later in the newsletter.



AFPACC

Australian Familial Pancreatic Cancer Cohort

In our June newsletter, we posed the question "Is pancreatic cancer hereditary?" and highlighted the fact that approximately 10% of all cases of pancreatic cancers may result from genetic susceptibility or familial aggregation. We are excited to announce the launch of our new Familial Pancreatic Cancer Project.

The Australian Familial Pancreatic Cancer Cohort, or AFPACC, is a registry targeting families with multiple members affected by pancreatic cancer. The registry is the first of its kind in Australia, and has a number of aims. By studying the DNA in families, we hope to identify new gene changes that are inherited and predispose certain family members to developing pancreatic cancer. We would also like to discover more about gene changes already known to us, such as

BRCA2, the breast cancer gene. In addition, the registry will help us further understand risks to unaffected family members and identify those eligible for the new pancreatic screening trial at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney.



It is very easy to become involved with AFPACC. Registration requires the completion of a family history questionnaire and possibly a blood sample for DNA studies. To reach its full potential, AFPACC relies on willing participants in the community. To raise awareness we are liaising with Familial Cancer Clinics and hospitals around Sydney. However if your family has had first hand experience with this devastating disease and you wish to join the fight against pancreatic cancer, there are a number of ways you can contact us:

- Fill out an online request via our website www.pancreaticcancer.net.au/afpacc/Request-to-join-AFPaCC
- Send an email to screening@pancreaticcancer.net.au
- Phone the AFPACC Clinical Coordinator (02) 9295 8408

Research Spotlight

Dr Jeremy Humphris

Gastroenterologist and
3rd year PhD student



New Insight from Tumour Markers

There is a need to develop biological markers (commonly known as biomarkers) to better group patients for treatment types and for the testing of individual treatment strategies.

Dr Humphris, a gastroenterologist in Sydney, has been looking further at the tumour marker CA19.9, the only biomarker currently available for pancreatic cancer. It was first identified in 1979 and has been shown to be helpful in diagnosing pancreatic cancer and is used to predict responses to treatment. The levels of CA19.9 can indicate the affect the tumour is having on the body, but can also be elevated by other causes, such as jaundice or yellowing of the skin.

Dr Humphris has studied a cohort of 260 people who underwent surgery for pancreatic cancer and assessed the relationship between CA19.9 levels and chemotherapy treatments and outcomes after surgery. It was shown that when CA19.9 had returned to normal levels 6 months after surgery had a much better outcome. Dr Humphris' work indicates that CA19.9 levels could be informative of how an individual is responding to treatment. This research has recently been published in the prestigious medical journal, Annals of Oncology.

APGI Website: New and Improved

We have now launched our new website as a resource for participants, researchers and members of the public to keep up to date with and support our research. The website is great place for people to learn more about pancreatic cancer, find out what to expect in surgery and treatment, and how to be involved in the APGI. It also highlights upcoming events, news and new APGI projects, including the Familial Cancer Project.

To keep up to date with the APGI you can check out our website or follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

www.pancreaticcancer.net.au

How Can You Help?

There are many ways you can give to pancreatic cancer research including fundraising, donating or supporting a pancreatic cancer event.

The support given by the community, whatever the size, is vital to continuing and furthering our research. Pancreatic Cancer is drastically under funded and under supported due to a lack of community awareness.

The APGI not only want to work towards better outcomes for pancreatic cancer patients but also to raise community awareness and support for their cause.

Find out more about ways you can support us by visiting:

www.pancreaticcancer.net.au/donate.



Team Phil: Running to beat pancreatic cancer, Melbourne Running Festival 2011

Jane Hemstritch created Team Phil in memory of her late husband Philip Hemstritch, who fought a two and a half

year battle with pancreatic cancer.

Jane rallied 20 friends to run the Melbourne Marathon to raise money for pancreatic cancer research and honour of Phil and others who have lost the fight against pancreatic cancer, including Dave Grant, Reg Hermstritch, Larry Levitan, Ian St. Lawrence, Garry Stewart and John Woutersz.

Team Phil has raised over \$77,000 thanks to many generous donations made by friends, family, colleagues, businesses and other associates.

