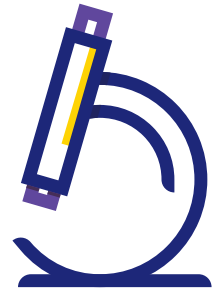


Cancer Trials Management Scheme Competitive Grants

Fostering innovation in cancer to save lives and ensure equitable access to clinical trials for all Victorians.



Clinical trial projects we fund

Project: Providing equitable, convenient and efficient access to novel cancer therapies:
A Phase I outreach program

Aim: To increase access to early phase clinical trials for cancer patients, by improving the clinical trial referral pathway

Grant recipient: A/Prof Jayesh Desai, University of Melbourne

Funded by: Funded by: Cancer Council Victoria and the Victorian Cancer Agency

Years funded: 2017 - 2019

The project

The newly formed Parkville Cancer Clinical Trials Unit (PCCTU) is an internationally competitive clinical trials unit that has over 200 open trials; of these trials, nearly 40% are early phase.

This project sought to increase access to Phase I trials for cancer patients and improve the entire clinical trial referral pathway to ensure patients are referred to the right clinical trials at the right time. This pathway covers the initial referral to a clinical trial, the consultation with the Phase I/Early Drug Development team and the information provided about Phase I trials for people with cancer.

The need

Maximising the opportunity for all Victorian patients to access clinical trials is critically important and is a key priority of the PCCTU.

Access to new cancer drugs remains an important part of patient care and is predominantly facilitated through early phase (Phase I) clinical trials. As one of the largest providers of early phase clinical trials for cancer outside of the United States and Europe, PCCTU is well positioned to improve the referral pathway and access to early phase cancer clinical trials for Victorian patients.

There is a dearth of information available about early phase clinical trials, highlighting an opportunity to improve patient awareness, understanding and referral into early phase clinical trials through appropriate information and referral support.

The outcomes

The early stages of this project focused on improving internal communication between clinicians at PCCTU and leveraging other funding sources to broaden this to other centres conducting early phase clinical trials, including Western Health, Austin Health and Monash Health.

The second part focused on improving patient referral and access to trials at PCCTU, including for patients from other metro, regional and private centres. This was achieved through the employment of a dedicated trial coordinator who has appropriate expertise and skills in clinical trial enrolment.

The third part included the establishment of a 'dedicated phase I clinic' which sees at least 8 new patients a week, with options for initial telehealth consultation and referral to PCCTU for treatment as required.

The final part focussed on providing education for patients. This includes resource development for patients on early phase clinical trials and plans to host recurring education forums and events.

Since June 2017, there has been a 70% increase in referrals to the Early Drug Development clinical trials unit at PCCTU and a 110% increase in the number of patients recruited into an early phase clinical trial.

What's next?

The outcomes and collaborative opportunities leveraged in this project have fed into the VCCC's Increasing Awareness of Clinical Trials Working Group and has led to the development of an early phase database to assist clinicians to easily identify available early phase clinical trials.

“ This project improved equity of access to early phase cancer trials for Victorians. Funding was directly used to develop a well-structured, formal patient pathway and address pre-existing barriers to efficient patient referral, communication, patient information and understanding. This not only translated into a significant increase in patient participation, but also improvements to the experience of accessing a Phase I trial. ” – A/Prof Jayesh Desai