

Strict Embargo:  
2100 Hours AEDT  
24 May 2017



## **Leading Australian Cancer Drug Developer, Cancer Therapeutics CRC, recognised for world leading cancer research**

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Cancer Therapeutics CRC (CTx) is proud to announce that it received the Australian CRC Association's (CRCA) Award for Excellence in Innovation at the annual awards dinner in Canberra on 24 May. CTx engages in ground breaking research targeted to the treatment of various cancers. The award is in recognition of CTx's discovery and development of novel oncology drug candidates targeting the PRMT5 enzyme. The enzyme regulates gene expression in cells and is a target for a range of cancers including common solid tumours and blood cancers. PRMT5 also plays a major role in switching between different types of haemoglobin in red blood cells and PRMT5 inhibitors are also being tested for their potential to assist in the treatment of important inherited disorders such as sickle cell disease and  $\beta$ -thalassemia.

The PRMT5 program was licensed to MSD (known as Merck in the US and Canada) in January 2016 in one of largest ever pre-clinical licensing deals originating from Australian research. The deal included a US\$15M signature payment, with the potential for a further US\$500M in development milestones, plus royalties on future product sales. A significant majority of all payments will be returned to the Australian biomedical sciences sector providing much needed support for further discovery and translation of Australian innovations. The PRMT5 program was based on research conducted by Professor Stephen Jane from Monash University.

Recognising the quality of scientific research in the CTx network and to support its PRMT5 development activities, MSD is also funding extensive collaborative research activities at CTx. These collaborations allow CTx's world leading oncology discovery and early development capabilities, specifically in the area of epigenetics, to continue contributing to the rapid advancement of the PRMT5 program.

CTx's CEO, Dr Warwick Tong said *'This award is further validation of the world class quality of the biology and chemistry research that is being undertaken in Australia and demonstrates that with the right financial support and clear direction, Australia's research can be translated into commercially successful outcomes. This is the fifth program that CTx has licensed and with a growing portfolio of epigenetic and immuno-oncology programs we anticipate there will be more to come.'*

**About CTx:** CTX is an oncology focused small molecule drug discovery and early development biotechnology group, established under the Australian government's Cooperative Research Centre initiative. CTx's unique partnership model leverages the capabilities and expertise of its Industry Participants with those of a number of Australia's pre-eminent Medical Research Institutes and Universities. CTX has successfully out-licensed multiple oncology programs and has established itself as a leader in epigenetics and immuno-oncology.

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**The Participant Partners of Cancer Therapeutics CRC are:**

Bionomics Limited, The Cancer Council of Victoria, Cancer Trials Australia, Children's Cancer Institute, Clinical Genomics Pty Ltd, CSIRO, CTxONE, Griffith University, INCResearch Australia Pty Ltd, Medicines Development Limited, Melbourne Health, Monash University, National Cancer Centre Singapore, Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute, SYNthesis Research Pty Ltd, Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre Ltd (VCCC) and The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research.

**About CRC Australia:** The Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) Programme, an Australian Government Initiative, is a competitive, merit based grant programme that supports industry-led and outcome-focused collaborative research partnerships between industry, researchers and the community.

(<https://industry.gov.au/industry/IndustryInitiatives/IndustryResearchCollaboration/CRC>)

**About PRMT5:** The PRMT5 protein is involved in many cellular processes including the epigenetic control of genes such as p53 – a gene that protects the cell against cancer-causing mutations and is faulty in nine out of ten cancers. High levels of PRMT5 protein are found in mantle cell lymphoma (MCL), chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL), melanoma, lung and breast cancers and is linked to poor survival.

In addition to applications for cancer, PRMT5 inhibitors switch on important genes in the development of blood, which could provide disease-modifying treatment options for patients with blood disorders like sickle cell disease and  $\beta$ -thalassemia.

For more information see [cancercrc.com](http://cancercrc.com) or contact  
Dr Warwick Tong, CTx CEO, on +61 (0) 450 296930