

Philanthropic donation funds lymphoma genomics centre

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Australia's first centre dedicated to genomics testing for the diagnosis and treatment of lymphoma has been officially launched at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne.

The Christine and Bruce Wilson Centre for Lymphoma Genomics will increase local capacity to deliver high level genomic testing on specimens which are currently often sent overseas.

Haematologist Professor Miles Prince, a director of the not-for-profit Snowdome Foundation, said the \$5.5 million donation from the Wilsons provided access to the latest genomics technology 'as well as some of the best people around'.

"Snowdome Foundation put in about \$4.5m to a myeloma genomics program some years ago and that really turbo-charged the facilities – the equipment as well as the right scientists, pathologists and bioinformatics people."

"When Bruce and Christine Wilson saw what we were doing in myeloma, they said we must do it in lymphoma," he added.

"It means we will be able to supply good quality, rapid turn-around genomic testing up front for patients with lymphoma. This will allow us to diagnose, prognosticate and plan personalised treatment from the very beginning rather than down the track when patients have run out of treatment options."

Professor Prince said not every patient would need genomic testing but it was now available for all subtypes of lymphoma.

"Ultimately it will be up to the doctor and the patient to determine if the patient needs to be tested but it's fair to say now that in large cell lymphoma, genomic testing is a key aspect of planning therapy."

“In these large cell lymphomas there are specific mutations that we know will result in a high risk of relapse, where drugs like ibrutinib which is used for CLL would be effective.”

“That’s a classic example where we may choose to use ibrutinib early or may choose drugs like lenolidomide early in patients at high risk of relapse.”

He said the Centre was ‘open for business’ to produce NATA accredited results on an expanded genomic lymphoma profile.