

Pacific Edge Biotechnology signs a collaborative research agreement with the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research.

Promising early results for aggressive melanoma test presented at American Society of Clinical Oncology annual meeting.

Pacific Edge Biotechnology Ltd, (PEB) is working with the Ludwig Institute's Centre for Clinical sciences in Melbourne, Australia, The focus is on completing the development of a prognostic tool for the segregation of patients with invasive melanoma. Pacific Edge has a number of programs aimed at developing novel tools and methods for the early detection and management of cancers. Its most advanced programs are in colorectal cancer, bladder cancer and gastric cancer.

Patients diagnosed with melanoma that has spread to the lymph nodes have notoriously unpredictable outcomes, with disease relapse and progression occurring anywhere between several weeks to many years. This variability leads to clinical uncertainty in determining the best course of treatment, and can lead to patients being both under and over-treated. The collaboration between PEB and the Ludwig Institute has set out to overcome the difficulty in identifying patients with aggressive disease by developing a gene expression profile that is able to distinguish between patients with good and bad outcomes.

The early results of the collaboration have been impressive. The team has determined a 15 gene expression signature, that has a predictive accuracy of around 90% and have filed a provisional patent. Further validation studies on independent samples will be completed in the third quarter this year. Successful validation studies would lead to a final clinical trial before the prognostic test being available for release to the market.

A test based on this gene signature will not only have application as a test of clinical outcome in melanoma patients but will also find utility in drug development. Patients with poor predicted outcome can be selected for clinical trials resulting in trial cost, size and duration being shortened and allowing new therapies to be focused on those most at need.

The discovery research for the melanoma prognostic assay was undertaken by two teams of researchers one in New Zealand and one in Melbourne. The New Zealand team led by Dr Parry Guilford and the Ludwig Institute team led by oncologist Prof Jonathon Cebon in collaboration with Dr Tom John. Dr John, who received a Merit Award from the American Society of Clinical Oncology for this research, has been invited to present the results at that society's annual meeting in Chicago on June 3rd.

New Zealand and Australia have a very high incidence of skin cancer with melanoma being the most serious of the skin cancers. New Zealand has one of the highest melanoma death rates in the world, with the most recent statistics indicating 244 New Zealanders died from melanoma in 2001. Skin cancer, by far the most common cancer affecting New Zealanders, is also one of the most expensive for the NZ health system, costing about NZ \$33 million per year. Sun exposure before the age of 20 years is a particularly strong risk factor for melanoma incidence and it has been estimated that, for every death from skin cancer, an average of 17.4 potential years of life are lost.

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The Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, (LICR), is a non-profit, global research institute conducting long-term basic and clinical research programs in cancer with approximately 800 scientists, clinicians, and support staff. LICR operates from branches in 9 locations around the world. LICR is the largest international non-profit institute dedicated to understanding and controlling cancer and brings together recognised leaders in many areas of science and oncology, and is one of twenty international organisations recognised as producing research articles of extremely high impact.

Pacific Edge Biotechnology is a biomedical company based in Dunedin, New Zealand, in close proximity to the University of Otago. The Company is engaged in research and product development of diagnostics and prognostic assays for cancers which has led to the development of proprietary tools for the early detection and improved management of cancers. Pacific Edge is traded on the NZX Stock Exchange under the stock code PEB and can be found on the web at www.peblnz.com .