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MEDIA RELEASE

Diamantina Institute officially unveiled

Tuesday, April 22, 2008

[The University of Queensland's Diamantina Institute for Cancer Immunology and Metabolic Medicine](#) was officially opened today (Tuesday, April 22) at the Princess Alexandra Hospital.

The Institute, one of UQ's six world-renowned research institutes, was opened by the Minister for Tourism, Regional Development and Industry Desley Boyle.

The Diamantina Institute has about 200 researchers and students in 11 research teams who work in areas of cancer cell biology, immunology, and metabolic medicine, covering a range of hormone related disorders such as diabetes.

Since its formation 16 months ago, Diamantina scientists have discovered new genes, released a blockbuster cancer vaccine and have raised \$14 million in competitive research grants so far this year.

Diamantina Director and cervical cancer vaccine co-creator, Professor Ian Frazer, said Diamantina researchers were making valuable inroads into diseases such as diabetes, breast and prostate cancer and forms of arthritis such as rheumatoid arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis.

Professor Frazer said a new approach to fighting cancer using the immune system to block or kill tumours, showed hope for skin cancers such as melanoma as well as kidney and bowel cancer.

About 22 million doses of the cervical cancer vaccine were sold around the world and reached women in more than 90 countries from Australia to Nepal.

Diamantina researchers are also preparing to move into a new flagship medical research facility on the PA grounds by 2012, called the Translational Research Institute (TRI).

UQ Vice-Chancellor Professor Paul Greenfield AO said Diamantina staff were among the best in Australia's research community.

“In the new Translational Research Institute, they will drive further collaborations with researchers nationally and internationally, adding to the promise that Diamantina science will deliver tangible health benefits worldwide,” Professor Greenfield said.

Today's opening coincides with a new UQ-led research project which aims to pinpoint the genes that cause cervical cancer.

Diamantina's Musculoskeletal Genetics Group Head, Professor Matt Brown, said he and Professor Frazer would lead a team of about 50 European, American and Australian scientists in the research.

Professor Brown recently discovered two new genes responsible for one third of the risk of developing a hereditary and debilitating form of arthritis known as Ankylosing Spondylitis.

Last year, about 840 patients in Australia and China were involved in Diamantina clinical trials while 170 volunteers also donated samples for use in Diamantina genetic studies.

The Institute was created on January 1, 2007 through the amalgamation of UQ's Centre for Immunology and Cancer Research (CICR) and its Faculty of Health run Centre for Diabetes and Endocrinology Research (CDER).

The TRI, which will be built near the current Diamantina Institute, will accommodate about 650 staff who will translate research into clinical trials, practice and therapeutic devices.

Phase two trials of Professor Frazer's new genital warts vaccine are nearing completion in Wenzhou, China and in Brisbane.

Media: Anton Sanker (07 3240 5938) or Penny Garaghty at PA Hospital media (3240 7899).

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