

## **Southampton researchers to share in £15m funding to develop better cancer treatments**

Researchers from the University of Southampton are to share in £15m of funding from Cancer Research UK to inspire collaborative cancer research between UK scientists through a new awards scheme.

The Cancer Research UK Centres Network Accelerator Award is a new initiative which provides infrastructure support to four new research centres in order to encourage collaboration between different organisations and boost 'bench to bedside' science.

Southampton scientists will contribute to one of these centres - a £3.9m project led by Queens University Belfast with Newcastle and Manchester universities, University College London and the Institute of Cancer Research.

The centre will develop new pathology and image analysis techniques for solid tumours. This includes research to improve cancer diagnosis through tissue imaging, biomarker discovery and clinical trials. The award will also invest in the next generation of scientists with a Clinical Fellowship programme in molecular pathology.

[Gareth Thomas](#), Professor of Experimental Pathology at the University of Southampton, said: "As we move towards an era of personalised medicine, the ability to accurately select patients likely to benefit from a particular cancer treatment is becoming an essential requirement of clinical practice. This often requires analysis of patient's tissues for biomarkers that predict for likely response to treatment.

"However, changes in levels of biomarker expression or distribution are often subtle and sub visual, and manual scoring by a pathologist may be time consuming and not practicable in current clinical practice. This program aims to develop automated digital pathology approaches to circumvent these issues; strengthening the existing digital pathology infrastructure across centres, establishing and standardising digital pathology and image analysis approaches, and consolidating strategically important links with other CRUK centres to establish national leadership in this field."

Dr David Scott, Cancer Research UK's director of science funding, said: "Effective partnerships are crucial for delivering the greatest science and boosting advancements in fighting cancer. We're proud to invest in collaborative and innovative research across the UK with the new Centres Network Accelerator awards. It's through working together and uniting expertise that we will do better research and save more lives."

The new award will build on Southampton's expertise in cancer immunology, with the Belfast-Southampton partnership aiming to be a first for molecular pathology integration within CRUK Centres. Southampton is also one of the largest UK training centres for young academic pathologists.

The Southampton team consists of Professors [Peter Johnson](#) (Centre Lead), [Gareth Thomas](#) (Pathology Lead), [Christian Ottensmeier](#) (immunotherapeutics) and Dr

Pandurangan Vijayanand (transcriptomic and epigenetic next generation sequencing).

This expertise, combined with recent exciting cancer immunology breakthroughs, has inspired the University of Southampton to launch a major fundraising campaign to open a world-leading Centre for Cancer Immunology at Southampton General Hospital in 2017. Through pooling knowledge and extending resources, the new state-of-the-art Centre aims to accelerate research progress and save more lives from cancer.

Ends

**Notes to editors:**

1. The CRUK network award was entitled 'A national digital pathology and image analysis platform for solid tumours, complemented by a comprehensive Clinical Fellowship programme in Molecular Pathology'.

2. About Cancer Research UK

- Cancer Research UK is the world's leading cancer charity dedicated to saving lives through research.
- Cancer Research UK's pioneering work into the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer has helped save millions of lives.
- Cancer Research UK receives no government funding for its life-saving research. Every step it makes towards beating cancer relies on every pound donated.
- Cancer Research UK has been at the heart of the progress that has already seen survival in the UK double in the last forty years.
- Today, 2 in 4 people survive their cancer for at least 10 years. Cancer Research UK's ambition is to accelerate progress so that 3 in 4 people will survive their cancer for at least 10 years within the next 20 years.
- Cancer Research UK supports research into all aspects of cancer through the work of over 4,000 scientists, doctors and nurses.
- Together with its partners and supporters, Cancer Research UK's vision is to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured.

For further information about Cancer Research UK's work or to find out how to support the charity, please call 0300 123 1022 or visit [www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org). Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

3. Building on its cancer immunology research expertise and recent successes in immunotherapy trials, the University of Southampton has launched a major fundraising campaign to raise £25m to open the UK's first dedicated Centre for Cancer Immunology at Southampton General Hospital in 2017. The Centre will be the first of its kind in the UK and will bring together world-leading specialists in a unique state-of-the-art centre. The aim of the new Centre is to accelerate research progress, conduct more clinical trials and save more lives from cancer. Find out more about it at [www.southampton.ac.uk/youreit](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/youreit)

4. Through world-leading research and enterprise activities, the University of Southampton connects with businesses to create real-world solutions to global

issues. Through its educational offering, it works with partners around the world to offer relevant, flexible education, which trains students for jobs not even thought of. This connectivity is what sets Southampton apart from the rest; we make connections and change the world. <http://www.southampton.ac.uk/>

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