The Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre (VCCC)

Director, Centre for Immunotherapy

December 2017
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Appointment of Director, Centre for Immunotherapy | December 2017
About the VCCC

The Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre (VCCC) was established in 2009 as a powerful alliance of ten successful Victorian organisations committed to cancer control. Its mission is to accelerate improvements in cancer outcomes by integrating cancer research, education/training and clinical care across all VCCC partner organisations. It aims to deliver three benefits for Victoria: a reduced burden of cancer; a world-class centre of excellence in cancer research, education and patient care; and increased investment in biomedical research.

The comprehensive cancer centre model, which has been operating in the USA for over 40 years, aims to accelerate the discovery, dissemination and adoption of better ways to prevent, diagnose and treat cancer through the integration of comprehensive programs of cancer research, education and clinical care. The key features of the CCC model have been adapted and strengthened through the VCCC alliance, to create a local comprehensive cancer centre model relevant to the Australian setting.

VCCC partners
The VCCC has two components:

1. The VCCC Project – a new, purpose-designed building adjacent to the Royal Melbourne Hospital in Parkville that enables shared cancer services in three co-located hospitals (the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Melbourne Health and the Royal Women’s Hospital) and increased collaboration for cancer research, education and training by the three building partners (the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Melbourne Health and the University of Melbourne). The VCCC building contains 10 clean rooms for cell therapies and a full range of laboratory platform technologies. The VCCC building was opened in July 2016.

2. The VCCC Alliance – a partnership that brings together the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre (Peter Mac), the University of Melbourne, the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, Austin Health and the Olivia Newton John Cancer Research Institute, Melbourne Health, the Royal Women’s Hospital, the Royal Children’s Hospital, Western Health, St Vincent’s Hospital Melbourne, Austin Health and the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute. Individually, these organisations are leaders in the sector, each bringing their strengths and specialities. Between them, the VCCC partners provide clinical services to around 40% of Victoria’s cancer patients (over 60% for some types of cancer) and enrol around 70% of the patients who are on cancer clinical trials in Victoria. The partners provided over 1.7 million occasions of service in relation to cancer over the last five years. With around 1400 cancer researchers across the ten partner institutions, around 400 PhD students in cancer research and $150 million in annual cancer research income, the VCCC partnership is by far the largest cancer research program in Australia.

High Impact Research

The VCCC is a multidisciplinary, multi-site cancer program. It has a critical mass of cancer experts who are dedicated to the use of new research discoveries to accelerate improvements in prevention, patient care and education on a large scale.

Over 10,000 cancer publications were produced in 2006-2014 (24% of Australian cancer publications) with an average citation and journal impact greater than the Victorian and Australian average (and twice the world average) in discovery and translational research. For 2006-2013, cancer publications with VCCC authors had a relative citation impact of 2.06, compared with a world average of 1.0 (and Australia’s average of 1.61). The quality and impact of VCCC cancer research leads Australia – 40% of Australia’s top 1% most cited cancer papers are authored by VCCC researchers.

Cancer Immunology

Across the VCCC partners, there are over 15 laboratories with a major focus on cancer immunology, supported by clinical faculty who undertake a broad range of clinical trials in cancer immunotherapy, including cellular therapies. Collectively, they have attracted over $200 million in research grants over the last 10 years. Peter Mac’s well-established Cancer Immunology Program is located in the VCCC building, and encompasses eight collaborating laboratories, extensive immunology research infrastructure and immune monitoring platforms, GMP-grade clean rooms and around 70 staff and post-graduate students. Close alignment of the existing and new programs will maximise the opportunities to speed the development of new immune-based therapies in various types of cancer.
The Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

The Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre is Australia’s only public hospital solely dedicated to caring for people affected by cancer, and one of an elite group of cancer hospitals worldwide with embedded research laboratories, which are uniquely integrated with extensive clinical and cancer experiences research programs.

Peter Mac provides services through its main campus in the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre building in Parkville and sites in Bendigo, Box Hill, Moorabbin and Sunshine. Peter Mac treats more cancer patients each year than any other hospital in Australia and our highly skilled medical, nursing and allied health team is backed by the largest cancer research group in the country. It has over 2,500 staff, all focused on providing better treatments, better care and potential cures for cancer.

Peter Mac’s research division has 580 laboratory and clinical researchers, with revenue for cancer research from peer-review, commercial and philanthropic sources of $80 million in 2016/17. Peter Mac’s fully integrated laboratory and clinical research has precipitated major changes in understanding the origins of cancer and in defining and testing new treatments in early phase and advanced clinical trials.

Key strengths include immunotherapy, cancer genomics, novel cancer therapeutics and early phase clinical trials.

Peter Mac’s Cancer Immunology Program includes research projects that span laboratory studies in cancer cell biology and biochemistry, through to first in human clinical trials in a range of cancers. In the past, the Program has made critical discoveries on the mechanistic and cellular basis of cancer immune surveillance, the molecular and cellular functions of killer T cells, and human cancer susceptibility related to immune deficiency states. A range of active and adoptive immunotherapy and small drug development strategies are now in development, with special interest in developing CAR T cell technologies and treatments, particularly for AML, lung cancer and rectal cancer. Other interests include the induction of immunogenic cancer cell death using targeted drug therapies or radiation, the regulation of checkpoint molecule expression on cancer cells, and the CD73/adenosine-tumour immunosuppression pathway. The Program recently secured several joint R &D collaborations with major pharmaceutical companies and is a partner in the federally-funded Zero Childhood Cancer (ZCC) initiative.
The Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences is the pre-eminent faculty of medical and health sciences in Australia, and a world leader in its class. The Faculty, renowned for global leadership in health research, policy and practice, is Australia’s largest biomedical research faculty with more than 1,700 academic staff, 4,000 honorary staff, 1,500 graduate researchers and circa 7,000 students. Its total research income for 2016 was $240 million. The Faculty contributes close to 60% of research conducted by the University. The Faculty’s new strategic plan Beyond 2018 sets out the ambition to change the world of health and healthcare and ensure that the Faculty is Australia’s leading health and biomedical faculty. Beyond 2018 sets out how the Faculty will capitalise on the changes in Australia’s National Health and Medical Research Council funding and the opportunities that the new Medical Research Future Fund provides.

Working with partner faculties in the University, and in partnership with hospitals and medical research institutes, the Faculty will make the most of their position and standing as a leading university for health and medicine in the Asia-Pacific Region.

The Faculty takes the lead overall for Australia’s clinical, pre-clinical and health sciences and was ranked 9th globally in 2018 by the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. Medical and health sciences at the University of Melbourne also achieved the maximum rating of five in the 2015 Excellence in Research for Australia Report. The University educates more health professionals, graduates, research and higher degree students and attracts more national competitive funding than any other Australian University.

The Faculty’s integrated approach to research, training and teaching is complemented by its successful strategic navigation of its myriad stakeholder relationships and its partnership work. The Faculty and the University as a whole have acted as the point of nucleation for a remarkable array of associated medical research institutes and hospital located in the Melbourne Biomedical Precinct.
The Melbourne Biomedical Precinct

The Melbourne Biomedical Precinct - a major global research and teaching powerhouse with its 30 health service, research and academic partners sharing a formidable history of ground-breaking medical discoveries and developments.

The Melbourne Biomedical Precinct partners include all the members of the VCCC as well as organisations with strengths in fundamental and clinical immunology such as:

- The Doherty Institute
- Bio21 Molecular Science and Biotechnology Institute
- CSL Ltd

Established in late 2016 by the Victorian State Government with the mission to drive economic development in the Precinct and strengthen its position as a world leader in biomedical research, development and innovation, its partners are largely collocated to the north of Melbourne’s CBD close to the University of Melbourne. Together, they employ around 28,000 people, including 10,000 researchers, and contribute around $3.6 billion to Victoria's gross regional product.

The Melbourne Biomedical Precinct excels particularly in cancer, child and adolescent health, mental health and neurosciences, infectious diseases, and healthy ageing. Both individually and collectively these organisations are globally recognised for their innovation and outstanding patient outcomes. They include the big hospitals, universities and research institutes that have fundamentally improved patient outcomes in Australia and internationally.
Melbourne is the capital city of Victoria, and is the second largest city in Australia. Melbourne is set around the shores of Port Phillip Bay. The City of Melbourne sits beside the Yarra River, around five kilometres from the Bay, and is home to approximately 73% of the Victorian population.

Melbourne is an international cultural centre, with cultural endeavours spanning major events and festivals, drama, musicals, comedy, music, art, architecture, literature, film and television. Melbourne is the birthplace of Australian film and television, Australian Rules football, Australian contemporary dance, and is home to the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia’s oldest and largest public art museum. In 2008, Melbourne became the second city after Edinburgh to be declared a UNESCO City of Literature. It has shared top position in a survey by the Economist of the world’s most liveable cities for 7 consecutive years, most recently in 2017 after achieving perfect scores in health care, education and infrastructure.

Melbourne’s metropolitan area cover more than 8000 square kilometres of southern Victoria. The City of Melbourne covers the city centre and a number of inner-city suburbs; each suburb has its own distinct personality and character. Parkville, the centre of the Melbourne Biomedical Precinct, is located 1.7 kilometres north of the City of Melbourne.
Position Summary

The vision for the VCCC Centre for Immunotherapy is to be a world leader in research and translation of immunotherapies for cancer into clinical practice. The VCCC, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and The University of Melbourne, along with the VCCC alliance partners, seek to appoint an outstanding researcher in the field of cancer immunotherapy as Director.

The Centre for Immunotherapy will conduct research in a range of areas of immunology and cancer biology with relevance to immunotherapy, and will provide strong links to clinical trial activities at all the VCCC partner organisations. Currently, there are over 100 personnel working in VCCC partner immunology laboratories, many of whom are co-located in the VCCC building. There is also extensive collaboration with industry in developing novel immunotherapies for cancer, including joint laboratory R&D activities and both first-in-human and advanced multi-centre clinical trials.

A key aspect of the role is to closely coordinate the activities of the VCCC Centre for Immunotherapy and future recruitment into the Centre with those of Peter Mac’s extensive Cancer Immunology and Immunotherapy Program, which is also located in the new VCCC building.
The Peter Mac program currently comprises eight collaborating laboratories with a broad range of interests in cancer immunology, ranging from laboratory-based molecular and cell biology, through to first-in-human clinical trials, and well-developed drug discovery programs.

The role will report to the Executive Director VCCC (for overall strategy for the VCCC-wide component of the role), and as a Group Leader at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, to the Executive Director Cancer Research (for scientific strategy and alignment with Peter Mac’s Immunology/Immunotherapy Programs).

An academic appointment at Level E (full Professor) will be through the University of Melbourne School of Biomedical Sciences.

The theme of immunology offers research and partnership opportunities in:
- clinical trials of immunotherapeutics;
- pre-clinical testing of existing and novel therapies;
- cell therapy;
- novel immunotherapeutic target discovery;
- biomarkers of existing and novel immunotherapeutics;
- novel combination therapy involving immunotherapeutics;
- immunological responses to therapeutics;
- mechanisms of immune system evasion in cancer;
- immune tolerance mechanisms in cancer;
- fundamental immunology research.

The Director of the Centre for Immunotherapy will have appointments and employment contracts at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, and the University of Melbourne. The role will report to the Executive Director VCCC (for overall strategy for the VCCC-wide component of the role), and as a Group Leader at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, to the Executive Director Cancer Research (for scientific strategy and alignment with Peter Mac’s Immunology/Immunotherapy Programs). An academic appointment at Level E (full Professor) will be through the University of Melbourne School of Biomedical Sciences. The appointment is for a period of 5 years and an attractive remuneration package will be offered to the preferred candidate.

Key Relationships

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre
- Associate Director, Laboratory Research
- Research Division, Executive Committee
- Executive Director, Cancer Research
- Cancer Immunology Program, Group and Team Leaders
- Other Group Leaders and Team Leaders
- Collaborators and other laboratory and clinical research staff
- Oncologists, haematologists and clinical trialists
- Core Facility staff
- Professional Services staff

VCCC Partners
- VCCC Executive Director and team
- VCCC Board and Cancer Research Advisory Committee
- Head of the University of Melbourne School of Biomedical Sciences
- Immunology researchers at the University of Melbourne and the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity
- Cancer Researchers at VCCC partner institutions
- Oncologists, haematologists and clinical trialists
Selection Criteria

**Essential**

- A PhD or equivalent in a relevant area/discipline.
- An international research track record and reputation in one or more fields of cancer and/or immunology research.
- A vision for building, leading, sustaining and growing an innovative new research program.
- A track record of successful leadership in research capacity building.
- Demonstrated ability to obtain and lead significant collaborative national and/or international competitive research grants.
- An outstanding track record of research publications in peer-reviewed highly ranked international journals.
- Demonstrated skills and experience in developing and leading research collaborations.
- Demonstrated leadership in facilitating effective and collaborative multidisciplinary research across multiple organisations.
- A track record of successful supervision of graduate and postgraduate students.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills suitable for a variety of audiences including academic peers and collaborators, clinicians, industry, community, policy makers and government.
- Commitment to the highest standards of scientific and ethical integrity.
- Outstanding interpersonal skills, with excellence in building and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders (internal and external) at all times, with the capacity to nurture a collegial organisational culture based on shared values and priorities.
- A demonstrated capacity to manage a research budget commensurate with research output and funding income.
Key Accountabilities

Leadership and Service
- Build and lead an internationally recognised research program relevant to cancer immunotherapy within the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and the VCCC alliance.
- Provide vision and academic leadership for clinical research relevant to immunotherapy and develop a strategic research agenda.
- Manage research funding obtained from research grants within the determined budgets and be accountable for the budget associated with the Centre for Immunotherapy.
- Be responsible for management and administrative tasks associated with the selection, performance assessment and organisation of staff employed in relation to the Centre for Immunotherapy, for whom the appointee has responsibility.
- Provide leadership in the maintenance of academic standards.
- Contribute where relevant to the committees of the VCCC, the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and the University of Melbourne.

Research and Research Training
- Build a multidisciplinary team of researchers with expertise in immunology and cancer biology.
- Recruit new groups into the Centre for Immunotherapy, in consultation with the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, the VCCC, the University of Melbourne and other key stakeholders.
- Produce novel, high quality research that links to clinical trials of immunotherapies to provide evidence for benefit to cancer patients.
- Develop strong research collaborations within the VCCC alliance and other appropriate affiliated hospitals, research institutes and partner organisations.
- Promote collaboration across institutions, nationally and internationally, as required to further research in immunotherapy.
- Obtain external funding for research from research funding bodies at local, national and international levels.
- Present research activities at local, national and international meetings.
- Contribute to the overall research strategy for the Peter Mac by participating in Faculty meetings, student committees and other committees as required.
- Successfully mentor junior researchers and students conducting research within the Centre.
- Supervise students (Honours, Masters, PhD) to completion.

Knowledge Transfer
- Contribute to professional development and training activities and resources for cancer clinicians in the clinical use of immunotherapies.
- Provide leadership and engagement with the community regarding immunotherapy in the treatment of cancer to elevate public awareness of educational and scientific developments, and promote critical enquiry and public debate.
- Influence the agenda and evidence-base for the use of immunotherapy in clinical practice.
- Obtain recognition by national or international professional bodies.
Appointment process and how to apply

The Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, the University of Melbourne and the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre will be supported in this appointment process by the executive search firm Perrett Laver. Perrett Laver will support the selection committee in the discharge of its duties, both to assist in the assessment of candidates against the requirements for the role and identify the widest possible field of qualified candidates.

Applications should consist of a full curriculum vitae detailing academic and professional qualifications, full employment history and relevant achievements. CVs should be accompanied by a covering letter describing how candidates meet the selection criteria outlined in the full position description, why the appointment is of interest, and what they believe they can bring to the role.

As part of this process, candidates may be invited to communicate with Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, VCCC and University representatives in person or by video conference. It is expected that final shortlisted candidates will be invited for interview in February 2018. The Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, the University of Melbourne and the VCCC reserve the right to choose not to fill this role. Initial enquiries should be directed to Martin Doppelt via email martin.doppelt@perrettlaver.com or by calling +61 (0) 2 8354 4020.

Applications should be uploaded at www.perrettlaver.com/candidates quoting reference 3247.

Applications close on Monday 5th February 2018.