

Media Release



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Alberta Cancer Foundation invests \$3 million into colorectal cancer research at the Cross Cancer Institute

EDMONTON —The Alberta Cancer Foundation has invested \$3 million into a colorectal research project that will prevent tumours from being able to repair themselves after radiation treatment, increasing the chance of success for patients facing this disease.

Some tumours have strong DNA repair systems and can withstand and recover from the damage to their DNA caused by radiation therapy or chemo drugs. This research team, led by University of Alberta and Cross Cancer Institute researcher, Dr. Michael Weinfeld, will develop a new drug to block the ability of those tumours to resist treatment and repair their own DNA. The team will also design nanocarriers to deliver those drugs to tumour tissues, where the drugs can accumulate and spare the healthy tissue.

Recognizing the importance of the work done on DNA cell repair, the Nobel Prize in chemistry was awarded last month to scientists who mapped, at a molecular level, how cells repair damaged DNA and safeguard the genetic information. Dr. Weinfeld's research has contributed to that global body of work.

"Dr. Weinfeld has a rich history of being both an innovator and a leader in cancer research," says Richard Fedorak, interim dean of the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry at the University of Alberta. "This funding will allow his team to generate valuable new knowledge about colorectal cancer, which, in turn, will lead to more effective patient treatment. I am proud to say that with the ongoing partnership and support of the Alberta Cancer Foundation, our scientists will continue to play a vital role in the global fight against cancer."

Colorectal cancer often presents no signs or symptoms early on so most are detected at later stages. By 2017, an estimated 2,500 Albertans will be diagnosed with the disease. Most patients will receive surgery and half will also require chemotherapy and radiation. Despite all these forms of treatment, approximately 33 per cent will die from the disease.

"We know this new type of drug being developed will be given in parallel with current therapies, increasing the effectiveness of the treatment we are now able to offer," says Myka Osinchuk, CEO of the Alberta Cancer Foundation. "This will ultimately increase survival rates for Albertans facing cancer and we are pleased to make this investment on behalf of our donors."

The drug is expected to be tested in clinical trials in about five years. Once proven in colorectal cancer, it has the potential to be applied to a wide range of cancer types.

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