



Australian & New Zealand Childrens Haematology/Oncology Group

### **PNOC-019/ NICHE-HGG trial: Now open in Australia**

**ANZCHOG is pleased to announce that Australian and New Zealand children diagnosed with a devastating brain cancer will now have access to one of the most promising treatments available worldwide.**

Children diagnosed with high grade gliomas (HGG) have a poor chance of survival – and once their disease recurs or progresses, there are no known effective treatments to cure their disease. The NICHE-HGG Trial (a randomised pilot trial of Neoadjuvant checkpoint Inhibition followed by Combination adjuvant checkpoint inHibition in childrEn and young adults with recurrent or progressive High Grade Glioma) is the first study to examine if immunotherapy can help boost the immune response in children with HGG, and will provide preliminary data on changes in patient survival.

“I am pleased that Perth Children’s Hospital is the first centre to offer this trial outside of the international sponsor’s site in the United States, with more of our centres to open soon,” said Australian Principal Investigator, Professor Nick Gottardo. “This means Australian and New Zealand children diagnosed with recurrent or progressive HGG will be among the first children world-wide to access these cutting edge immunotherapy agents, which have had tremendous success in the treatment of other cancers. This is desperately needed, as we have limited treatment options for these children once their front-line therapies fail.”

Harnessing the patient’s own immune system to target and eliminate tumour cells (called “immunotherapy”) has emerged as an effective treatment for some previously incurable adult cancers, such as melanoma and non-small cell lung cancer. Recent research has shown that use of immunotherapy agents, known as checkpoint inhibitors, before surgery resection can “prime” the patient’s immune response. This priming process, described as “neoadjuvant immunotherapy” appears to trigger a stronger anti-tumour effect compared to when the checkpoint inhibitors are only administered after surgery. Excitingly, this strategy has improved patient survival in a pilot trial for adults with HGG.

NICHE-HGG was developed by the Pacific Pediatric Neuro-Oncology Consortium (PNOC), a consortia based in the United States, with study sites across the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. “This trial is also important for cementing our collaboration with PNOC, which will enable us to participate in their evolving portfolio of innovative trials for a range of brain cancers. This is vital to ensure our children continue to access the latest promising treatments here in Australia and New Zealand,” noted Professor Gottardo.

ANZCHOG would like to acknowledge the generous support of NICHE-HGG co-funders: Cure Brain Cancer Foundation/ Love for Lachie and the Robert Connor Dawes Clinical Trials Program. NICHE-HGG will open at nine children’s cancer centres across Australia and New Zealand.

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