



## Funding secured for Interfant-21 study

**March 16, 2023**

Thanks to support from the Australian Government and The Kids' Cancer Project, an important trial investigating a treatment protocol for infants with leukaemia will soon be opened in Australia.

The Interfant-21 study is a treatment protocol involving the medication "blinatumomab" for infants who are diagnosed under one year of age with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (infant ALL) with a specific unfavourable genetic alteration. Infant ALL is a rare disease and comprises about 4% of childhood ALL.

Historically, infant ALL has had a very poor prognosis and survival has not improved significantly over the last two decades, with an event-free survival rate of less than 40%. Infants who have a certain genetic change in their leukaemia cells, known as a *KMT2A*-rearrangement, have a particularly poor prognosis. The intensive chemotherapy treatment currently available entails high toxicity, often leading to treatment related mortality. Hence, improvements in future outcomes require a shift from intensive chemotherapy to replacement with less toxic and more effective treatments.

Interfant-21 is the latest study to emerge from the international research network formed in 1999 for the treatment of children with infant ALL. The study will bring together promising preliminary data and indicators obtained from recent pilot studies and clinical trials, providing the opportunity to comprehensively test innovative strategies to improve outcome in infants with this condition.

National Principal Investigator for the study, Dr Rishi Kotecha, said, "The promising pilot data that has emerged with the use of blinatumomab for infant ALL will be rigorously tested in this phase 3 study and there is strong optimism that it will shift the needle to finally improve outcomes for this aggressive cancer".

The Australian and New Zealand Children's Haematology and Oncology Group (ANZCHOG) is the Australian sponsor of this study which will open mid-2023.

The Medical Research Future Fund, under the Clinical Trials Activity initiative, and The Kids' Cancer Project will jointly fund the Interfant-21 study in Australia for up to five years to the tune of approximately \$1.2 million.

~ Ends ~

*ANZCHOG is a non-profit organisation committed to ensuring Australian and New Zealand children receive world-class cancer care. We are the peak professional body for paediatric oncologists and health professionals who care for children with cancer, spearheading national initiatives to enhance clinical care through communication, research, networking and education. We are also the national cooperative clinical trials group for childhood cancer, actively working with trial consortia around the globe to ensure Australian and New Zealand children have the opportunity to access the latest promising cancer treatments.*

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