26 October, 2016

MEDIA RELEASE

New Clinical Genomics Unit Set to Radically Change Understanding and Treatment of Major Diseases

The St Vincent's Clinical Genomics Unit, which has been established by the Garvan Institute of Medical Research and St Vincent's Hospital will today be opened by the Hon. Pru Goward MP, NSW Minister for Medical Research.

One of the first in the world, the new Unit will enable the application of whole genome sequencing to understand the basis for hereditary diseases, and pave the way for tailored measures to minimize risk of disease. In doing so, suitable patients will now be offered a form of precision medicine leveraging recent advances in the field of genomics by bringing together existing and new expertise on the St Vincent's campus.

The Clinical Genomics Unit will treat patients with a wide variety of diseases for pre- and post-genomic management and counselling for patients. The Unit will work with the Garvan's Genome.One, where genome sequencing and interpretation will be undertaken, furthering teaching and research, through the Kinghorn Centre for Clinical Genomics and clinical partners.

Doctors from a variety of specialist units throughout the St Vincent's Campus will be able to refer patients to the multidisciplinary clinic for a genetic consultation by a geneticist/genetic counsellor, with input from relevant sub-specialists. Appropriate patients will then undergo clinical genomic testing and multidisciplinary analysis.

According to Professor Jerry Greenfield, Founder of the St Vincent's Clinical Genomics Unit, "For the first time, we will be able to access genomic information about our patients that will shine new light on their disease, enabling far more informed diagnoses and treatments. In some instances we may find other diseases present, in other cases we might revise the diagnosis and in the majority of cases we will be more enlightened about the patient's individual disease to enable us to provide more precise and tailored treatment."

Genomics the analysis of the DNA in our cells, the genetic heritage that we inherit from our parents, which has many variations and idiosyncrasies that make us the way we are and which play a major role in health and disease. Genome sequencing is now practical, and this information is invaluable in the clinic as well as in research.

The St Vincent's Clinical Genomics Unit provides a clinical-laboratory interface, a bridge for genomic medicine to be integrated into the mainstream of Australian healthcare. Patients referred to the Unit will be offered comprehensive genetic counselling and genomic testing on the same campus for the first time in Australia in order to advance personalised care and obtain better outcomes.

Through the Unit's testing, clinicians will be provided with diagnostic information, which until now has not been available, facilitating more individualised treatment. Genome sequencing may also identify secondary findings that are unrelated to the initial clinical inquiry but which may have important health implications and associated treatments. In light of the sensitivity involved, these testing methodologies therefore require pre-test consultations with a specialist geneticist and/or genetic counsellor to ensure appropriate levels of care and consultation.

Dr Kathy Wu, Lead Clinician Geneticist of the Unit added, “Testing can potentially open up other options such as predictive testing for the relatives, allowing them to take preventive measures if appropriate.”

“Today is a very significant day for the St Vincent’s Campus. The new Unit embodies everything about translational research and is exactly what was envisaged when the Garvan was first conceived in the late 1950’s. What we are witnessing here are diagnostic and prognostic breakthroughs on a scale that no-one would have anticipated only a decade ago, being rapidly applied to the patient to provide far more precise treatment,” said A/Prof Anthony Schembri, CEO of St Vincent’s Hospital.

“This will be the portal to the future of medicine,” said Professor John Mattick, Executive Director of the Garvan Institute of Medical Research.

What:	**Opening of St Vincent’s Clinical Genomics Unit featuring Minister Goward, Professor Greenfield and patient Charlotte Lawrence-Slater**
When:	**11am 26 October, 2016**
Where:	**Media to assemble at Front Entrance, St Vincent’s Hospital Sydney**
Contact:	**David Faktor, St Vincent’s Hospital 02 83822866**