



## **New clinical trial program to prevent and treat HIV-associated cancers**

**Sydney, Australia (7 June 2016)** – A leading researcher from the Kirby Institute at UNSW and St Vincent's has been awarded a major Cancer Institute grant to develop a clinical trial program in cancers associated with HIV infection at St Vincent's Hospital.

Dr Mark Polizzotto has been recognised with a prestigious five year Future Research Leaders Fellowship from the Cancer Institute NSW. The goal of the program is to develop new therapies to improve outcomes for people with HIV and cancer.

“People living with HIV remain at a substantially elevated risk of cancer, with cancer now being the leading cause of death in this group,” said Dr Polizzotto. “As people with HIV live longer, cancers are becoming increasingly important causes of morbidity and mortality, however people living with HIV are excluded from standard clinical trials of new cancer therapies, partly due to the complexity of their medical condition. It is therefore essential that dedicated trials are available to enable them to reap the benefits of rapid and ongoing advances in cancer therapy.”

As part of this new clinical research program, and supported by the new grant, Dr Polizzotto has led the development of a new collaboration with the U.S. National Cancer Institute AIDS Malignancy Consortium, the peak clinical trial group for HIV-associated malignancies globally. This has enabled the establishment of an AIDS Malignancy Consortium clinical trial site at the Kirby Institute and St Vincent's Hospital, their first core site outside the United States. Through this collaboration, Australian patients with HIV-associated cancers will be able to access these innovative trials of new therapies for the first time.

In addition to new trials of treatments, the grant also includes support for trials of novel approaches to preventing certain HIV-associated cancers and the establishment of a clinical biobank to support future basic and translational research in the field. Dr Polizzotto is a member of the Translational Cancer Research Network, based at UNSW, which will support these collaborative projects.

**Quotes:**

“Fittingly Dr Polizzotto will be located in the recently opened Translational Research Centre at St Vincent’s. Mark’s cross-disciplinary approach working jointly with St Vincent’s and the Kirby is the embodiment of what collaboration is all about on the Campus – working together in the lab and in the clinical setting to fast track breakthroughs for the betterment of our patient outcomes. We applaud the Cancer Institute for their vision in recognising the importance of this work.”

- **St Vincent’s Hospital CEO A/Professor Anthony Schembri**

“The Kirby Institute and St Vincent’s have a thirty year legacy of highly effective collaboration that has brought about some of the most important breakthroughs in HIV research and patient care. This trail-blazing enterprise, which involves clinical trial management by the Kirby with trial procedures and patient care at the hospital, will benefit from the strength of that partnership and will have a direct impact on the health of the growing population of people living with HIV who develop cancer.”

- **Director of the Kirby Institute, Professor David Cooper AO**

“We applaud the establishment of this timely new clinical trial program to enable people living with HIV who develop cancer access to emerging new therapies,” said Positive Life NSW acting-CEO Lance Feeney. “As people living with HIV have a recognised higher risk of cancers, we believe this collaborative effort will have significant benefit for those affected by cancer and HIV and improve health outcomes for our community.”

- **Living Positive NSW, Acting CEO and Senior Policy Advisor, Lance Feeney**

For more information please contact:

David Faktor, St Vincent’s Hospital: 83822866

Laurie Legere, Kirby Institute: 9385 9987