

Asia charity trek

A local mother and her hairdresser have teamed up to help cancer research by hiking and cycling across South-East Asia for two weeks.

Jennifer Zuber, of Matraville, and Maroubra hairdresser Frank Merenda will raise funds for the Cure Cancer Australia Foundation by participating in the foundation's Race for a Cure: Asia Challenge.

The challenge requires participants to traverse Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand. They then give the proceeds to the foundation.

For Mrs Zuber, the contribution is personal. Her aunt died of pancreatic cancer 19 years ago.

"After 19 years, there is still no cure for pancreatic cancer," she said. "I was drawn to the Cure Cancer Foundation. Their funding gives young and innovative scientists the support they need."

Mr Merenda is more philosophical about his contribution.

"I feel that sitting around doing nothing while millions of people around the world die needlessly is precious life wasted," he said.

"I hope I can serve humanity on this challenging journey and raise vital funds to find a cure for this disease."

The journey will place huge physical demands on the pair.

Both have begun a fitness program to prepare for the challenge.



Gene key to smart cancer cures

IDENTIFICATION of a key gene implicated in aggressive tumours could open the way for the treatment and cure of such cancers, a leading Sydney researcher has said.

The breakthrough has earned Dr David Ziegler and his team at Children's Cancer Institute of Australia a \$100,000 grant from the Balnaves Foundation.

Dr Ziegler said that the results of the gene research had been "very exciting".

"This may be the reason these tumours are so nasty and don't respond to treatment," he said.

The two-year grant will allow for genetic experiments testing whether the gene is responsible for cancer aggression and how it can be manipulated.

"We'll see if by switching it off we can make these cancers treatable, and maybe even curable," Dr Ziegler said.

"Till now, treatments like chemotherapy are essentially poisons.



Dr David Ziegler

"We're now looking at new, smart treatments."

The institute is housed within the Lowy Cancer Research Centre on the campus of the University of South Wales.

— By intern James Macdonald