

Dr Catherine Suter – exploring the cause of hereditary cancer



Dr Catherine Suter is now Head of Epigenetics at the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute.

Catherine leads a team working in epigenetic gene regulation, researching the causes of hereditary cancer. Her research is cutting edge and she continues to break new ground by exploring uncharted paths.

Dr Suter's career in cancer research has been greatly assisted by funding support from Cure Cancer Australia. In 2004, she was named National Young Researcher of the Year as part of an awards process designed to recognise and celebrate

exceptional cancer researchers early in their careers.

In 2008 she was also awarded a Macquarie Group Foundation Fellowship in Cancer Research and says "Cure Cancer Australia provided me with a very unique opportunity that has opened so many doors for me." **"My Cure Cancer grant represented a turning point in my career."**

"In the field of cancer research it's a bit of a catch 22 – organisations are hesitant to provide backing without experience, but how do you start out as a young researcher? You need a grant to get a grant. When first starting out, I found it so difficult to secure funding that I even considered quitting research altogether.

Today, I've got my own lab and my own independent funding. I can work on my own ideas; I feel like I've made it now. Cure Cancer allows researchers to keep the fruits of their work within Australia."

The early funding Catherine received from Cure Cancer allowed her to really springboard and go on to achieve wonderful outcomes for cancer patients worldwide.

In collaboration with several clinical teams across Australia, Catherine and her team are now investigating if there are there some individuals who carry an epimutation in a small proportion of their cells, and how this relates to cancer predisposition.

Her current project has the potential to identify a fundamental pathway in cancer development that could be targeted for therapy in many cancers. Dr Suter said: "The aim of this current research is to better understand how common cancers arise, and with understanding comes progress.

Examining the role of retroelements in gene silencing is a new way of thinking in cancer research, and has the potential to open up new avenues for anticancer therapies and cancer prevention strategies.

In doing this research we hope to obtain information that will ultimately lead to better treatments, more sensitive diagnostic techniques to detect early-stage cancer and knowledge that may help to reduce the likelihood of cancer developing in the first place."