

New US/Australia Memorandum of Understanding a Significant Step Forward in Cancer Care

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the College of American Pathologists (CAP) to collaborate in the development of cancer datasets which will bring huge benefits to patients and specialists in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

President of the RCPA, Associate Professor Paul McKenzie, says the MOU, achieved in conjunction with the Australian National Structured Pathology Reporting for Cancer Project, is a first step in the development of international Standards for Cancer Reporting.

“The ‘Structured Reporting Guidelines,’ developed with the support of the Department of Health and Ageing, Cancer Australia and the Cancer Institute NSW, decipher and break down complex and detailed pathological information about cancer type, stage and prognostic biomarkers into a standard format,” says A/Prof McKenzie.

Associate Professor David Ellis, an Anatomical Pathologist and Chair of the Project Group for the National Structured Pathology Reporting for Cancer Project, says the new reporting format provides a uniform communication tool for all those involved in the care of cancer patients.

“Moreover, this format allows cancer datasets to be reported in a standardised manner across Australia, and, as a result, enables diagnostic information to be shared more easily between countries – which is where the new MOU fits in,” says A/Prof Ellis.

Initially, the MOU involves the RCPA and the CAP working together to establish common cancer dataset elements such as mandatory and optional items, as well as agreed naming conventions, terms and values. In the longer term, the MOU will assist the RCPA and the CAP to jointly develop cancer protocols which will improve cancer data information available for research and comparison and raise the standard of reporting internationally.

“The MOU formally recognises the important collaboration we are undertaking with our pathology colleagues in America, and represents a significant step forward in ensuring that the pathology report for every cancer patient around the world is standardised to the same high level of detailed information and in the same clear format,” says A/Prof McKenzie.

“The MOU will not only drive epidemiological research but it will also further enhance the delivery of best practice patient care on a global level.”

The RCPA is the leading organisation representing pathologists in Australasia. Its mission is to train and support pathologists and to improve the use of pathology testing to achieve better healthcare. More information about RCPA can be found at www.rcpa.edu.au.

The College of American Pathologists (CAP) is a medical society that serves more than 17,000 physician members and the laboratory community throughout the world. It is the world's largest association composed exclusively of board certified pathologists and is widely recognized as the leader in laboratory quality management. The CAP is an advocate for high quality and cost-effective patient care. More information about CAP can be found at www.cap.org.

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