

RCPA welcomes US recommendations to clear the way for genetic research

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA) has joined peak Australian cancer bodies in welcoming new recommendations from the US Department of Health that patented genes should be able to be freely used for the purposes of patient care or research.

The US Secretary's Advisory Committee on Genetics, Health, and Society recommended that an exemption be created from liability for infringement of patent claims on genes for anyone using patent protected genes for patient care purposes and in the pursuit of research.

Chairman of the RCPA Genetics Advisory Committee, Dr Graeme Suthers, says the recommendations are timely, given that the Australian Senate is preparing to report on its inquiry into gene patent law.

"Genetic material is not an invention, but a discovery," says Dr Suthers.

"It's crucial that we put measures in place now to ensure there are no barriers in the future to patient care or medical research.

"It is hoped that the Australian government would adopt similar recommendations to those now announced in the US, so that genetic patents will not interfere with the provision of critical diagnostic testing at a reasonable cost to the Australian community, nor stifle research in this important area of health care."

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