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## \$2 million Research Project to Address Poor Rural Cancer Outcomes

In an Australian first, a team of WA researchers will look for the reasons why people from regional and rural areas with cancer do worse than metropolitan cancer patients.

The project will be the single largest and most significant study to look at ways to avoid delay, assure patients get the best treatment and ultimately improve outcomes for Australian rural cancer patients.

The five-year study has received a total of \$2 million in funding including a major grant of \$1.2million from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) , \$450,000 from the Cancer Council WA through the AH Crawford Rural Cancer Research Initiative, \$150,000 from the WA Cancer and Palliative Care Network and \$150,000 from the WA Department of Health.

One of the lead researchers, Professor Jon Emery from the University of Western Australia, said the fact that cancer patients from rural and remote areas don't do as well was of national and international concern.

"We already know that people with cancer from rural backgrounds do worse overall but we need to know the detailed reasons why so we can improve the situation.

"This is the first study that will assess in detail the patient's journey from initial symptom through to final treatment, aiming to identify points along that journey where there may be significant delay, or problems with access to treatment," Professor Emery said.

Cancer Council WA Chief Executive Susan Rooney said it was unacceptable that country cancer patients don't fare as well as those in the city.

"It's time to find ways to improve the lot of the country cancer patient. This research is an important recognition of the difficulties many rural and regional cancer patients face in effectively tackling their cancer."

People from regional areas account for around 20 per cent of the 10,000 new cancer cases diagnosed in WA every year.

"The Cancer Council has a strong commitment to supporting country cancer patients and contributing to this research is another way we can assist cancer patients across WA.

"We are very grateful to the generosity and vision of the AH Crawford Cancer Treatment Society\* in enabling us to provide funding for this crucial research," Ms Rooney said.

The Director of the WA Cancer and Palliative Care Network Professor Ian Hammond said the study had the potential to advance treatment for cancer patients across Australia and the world.

"As a surgical oncologist I see country cancer patients every day and I know they are not doing as well. We have a responsibility to find out why and change whatever it is that is not working for these patients."

“I congratulate the research team for taking on this challenge and providing a voice for those cancer patients who live a long way from the larger treatment centres,” Professor Hammond said.

The study is one of the first national NHMRC partnership grants that specifically aims to bring together researchers, service providers, policy makers, and community organisations from the inception of the research.

“We hope that this approach will provide meaningful results that are more likely to be taken up into practice and healthcare policy Australia-wide,” Professor Emery said.

The project will run over five years and will involve communities in the Mid-West, Peel, the South-West, Wheatbelt, Goldfields and Great Southern.

### **Collaborative Research Team**

Prof Jon Emery	UWA, School of Primary Aboriginal and Rural Health Care
Prof D'Arcy Holman	UWA, School of Population Health
Prof Christobel Saunders	UWA, School of Surgery
Dr Fiona Walter	University of Cambridge, Dept of Public Health & Primary Care
Dr Rachael Moorin	UWA, School of Population Health
A/Prof Kirsten Auret	Rural Clinical School of Western Australia
Dr David Preen	UWA, School of Population Health
Prof Max Bulsara	University of Notre Dame
Prof Lin Fritschi	WA Institute for Medical Research
Dr Anna Nowak	UWA, School of Medicine and Pharmacology
A/Prof Leanne Monterosso	Curtin University of Technology
Dr Lavinia Vaz	Combined Universities Centre for Rural and Remote Health
Mr Terry Slevin	Cancer Council Western Australia
Dr Michael Mears	Rural Clinical School of Western Australia

### **Media Contact:**

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*\*The AH Crawford Cancer Treatment Society was established in 1976 by Algernon Henry Crawford, a sheep farmer from Brookton who lost his mother, an aunt and other relatives to cancer and wanted to ensure country cancer patients received the support they needed when going to the city for treatment.*