

New centre targets epidemic battles

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The John Curtin School of Medical Research will be home to the Australian part of the new centre.

The early identification of 'bio-markers' to aid in the fight against diabetes, depression and other epidemic diseases will be the focus of a new Australian-German centre launched today at The Australian National University.

The Australian-German Institute for Translational Medicine (GAITM) is a joint project between the John Curtin School of Medical Research (JCSMR) at ANU and the Technische Universität Dresden. It will be run by JCSMR Director Professor Julio Licinio and Professor Stefan R Bornstein of the Department of Medicine at the Dresden University Hospital.

It will work to develop a research and knowledge exchange program between the two countries with the aim of preventing epidemic diseases such as diabetes, depression, high blood pressure and dementia.

"This is a very exciting development in the newly-emerging field of translational medicine," said Professor Licinio.

"The research the Institute undertakes will work towards new treatment methods using translational medicine. Translational medicine aims to quickly translate new developments in science to the patient by combining research findings from the laboratory and traditional clinical research leading to a quicker development of new diagnostic procedures, drugs or therapies.

"We're delighted to partner with the Technische Universität Dresden in this important endeavour. Both universities are pioneering the academic roll out of translational medicine, and both bring vast amounts of experience and expertise to the Institute," he added.

GAITM is financed by the International Office of the German Federal Ministry of Research and Technology and the Institute will have offices at both universities. Its first work will look at diseases which are commonplace in both the Asia-Pacific region and Europe.

"The focus of GAITM will be on the analysis of bio-markers such as blood fats, enabling the prediction of diseases such as hypertension, diabetes or depression, and the diagnosis of these at a very early stage," said Professor Licinio.

"The first studies will be carried out in 2011 and involve patients in Europe and Asia-Pacific. The Institute will then gather those research results and compile a common database, which will prove invaluable in the fight against many commonplace diseases."

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