



From the Executive Officer

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Biobank Brief, the newsletter of the Victorian Cancer Biobank. This first edition coincides with the end of our first full year of operation and I would like to thank the many people who have worked with us over the year for their contribution. We wish you all the best for the holiday season and look forward to your support in 2008.

Having commenced in the role of Executive Officer in November 2006, I have enjoyed the challenges and rewards of participating in the implementation process throughout the year. Significant progress has been made in banking samples with more than 2,000 donors across metropolitan Melbourne consenting to their tissue and blood being collected, processed and stored.

The Biobank Consortium was established following the successful application to the Victorian Government for \$7 million in funds through the Science, Technology and Innovation Grant scheme, with The Cancer Council Victoria acting as the Lead Agency.

The four founding members of the Consortium: Austin Health, Melbourne Health, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and Southern Health, brought to the Consortium significant experience and expertise in tissue banking. All members committed to provide matching funds in the form of in-kind contributions and are represented on the Consortium Committee. Additional members on the Consortium Committee provide expertise and skills

in the areas of cancer treatment, cancer research, pathology, law and ethics, finance, marketing, and cancer advocacy to guide the establishment of the Biobank. Two sub-committees support the Consortium Committee: the Access Committee and the Informatics Committee.

Our Operating Model

The Biobank is implementing a unique operational model involving a multicentre "hub and spokes" system for tissue collection and processing, combined with a centralised application process aimed at providing fast and efficient access to biospecimens. The Tissue Bank Managers from the four Consortium members: Carmel Murone (AH), Audrey Partanen (MH), Lisa Devereux (Peter Mac) and Pam Mammers (SH), meet every two months with the Executive Officer and the Quality & Operations Manager, Zoe Squire, to discuss issues at each site and to ensure that rolling out the model results in a coordinated and integrated program for collection and distribution.

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Accessing Biospecimens & Data

As a first step towards providing researchers with specimens, the Biobank Access Committee developed a set of Policies and Procedures, including conditions of use and reporting requirements. Application forms are available on the website (www.viccancerbiobank.org.au) and can be downloaded, completed and submitted.

At present, availability of specimens is provided by contacting the Biobank. However, a centralised web-based informatics system is currently being developed to enable researchers to preview availability and apply for biospecimens and associated data online. The Informatics Committee is providing expertise and guidance to the Consortium Committee on all aspects of the informatics platform development. As part of this development, we are working closely with the Bio21:MMIM project team to link together through a central "hub" the tissue related data that is entered and stored at each of our four Consortium member sites. Importantly, in the future, the MMIM platform will provide clinical and follow-up data associated with the biospecimens.

Allocating Funds

Funding is being distributed through a series of program grant agreements to support staff as well as equipment for processing and storage of biospecimens. In 2007, the Agreements provided funding for twelve staff located at the four Consortium member sites and in the Pathology Departments of two associate member sites: St Vincent's Hospital and the Royal Women's Hospital. The Tissue Bank Managers and more experienced staff at each site have worked together to successfully train the new staff.

One of the key objectives of the Biobank is to improve capabilities in molecular pathology, which is the important step towards development of targeted cancer therapies. To support progress in this area, funding has also been allocated for additional Pathology Registrars appointed to the Anatomical Pathology Departments associated with the four Biobank sites. All four Registrars have now been appointed.

Building Relationships

The Biobank depends on the support of donors from the public to achieve our main objective of providing high quality biospecimens and data to the research community. To inform the broader community of our activities, an Information Brochure for Prospective Donors is distributed at all participating hospitals. The official launch of the Biobank by the Minister for Innovation, the Hon Gavin Jennings (see next section) received significant media coverage, which also increased public awareness.

A number of presentations have been given at various hospitals and research institutes and Information Brochures for Clinicians and Researchers distributed at conferences. The positive feedback and support received highlights the value of the Biobank to the research community.

Future Challenges

Next year will bring some exciting new challenges as we move forward.

These will include working to:

- Expand collection across all tumour streams
- Balance the collection to ensure we can meet the needs of the research community
- Expand our capability to provide project specific and fresh tissue collection
- Collaborate with clinical trials groups requiring biospecimen collection
- Increase value added reagents and services such as tissue microarray, DNA and RNA preparation
- Develop an IT platform to support operations, including a web-based biospecimen locator and application process
- Streamline the cost recovery process to provide funding for sustainability.

By meeting these challenges in 2008 and beyond, we aim to provide a valuable resource to researchers that will enhance the opportunity for research outcomes and translate into benefits for the whole community.

Dr Anne Thompson, Executive Officer, Victorian Cancer Biobank

Biobank Launch on 4 September 2007

The Biobank was officially launched on 4 September 2007 by the Minister for Innovation, the Hon Gavin Jennings.

In his speech, Mr Jennings said, "This important facility will strengthen Victoria's reputation as a global centre for medical research and healthcare solutions."

He also called on the public to support the Biobank by donating tissue.

Bill Kennedy, shared his experience of donating to the Biobank in a heartfelt and humorous speech.

Excellent media coverage was received: ABC, Channels 7 and 9 covered the story in the evening news bulletins; regional and interstate radio programs interviewed Anne Thompson and Bill Kennedy; and articles were published in the Herald Sun, Ballarat Courier and Bendigo Advertiser.



Melbourne hosts the 5th Annual Australasian Biospecimen Network Conference

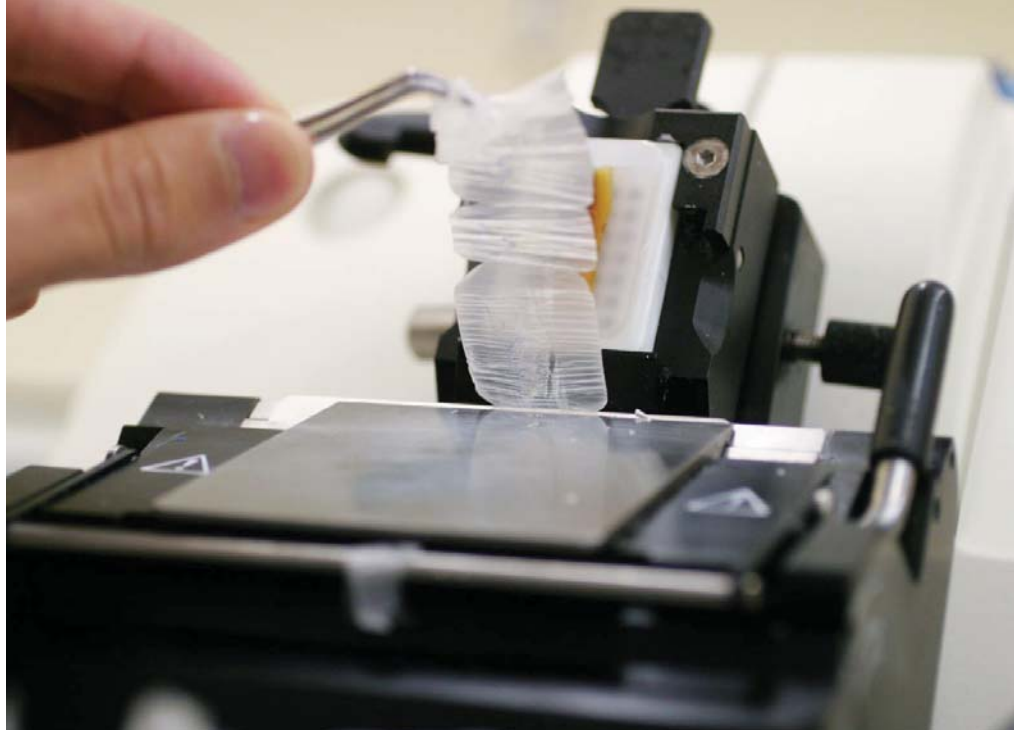
The opportunity to exchange information and review protocols is vital to biobanking professionals involved with the Victorian Cancer Biobank. Many members of the Biobank are involved with the Australasian Biospecimen Network (ABN). This is a national group, funded by a National Health and Medical Research Council Enabling Grant, with a focus on education, networking and maximising access to high quality biospecimens for research across Australia. This mission is consistent with the aims of the Biobank. Mid-October saw a large group of biobanking professionals gather at the Rendezvous Hotel in Flinders Street, Melbourne at the 5th Annual ABN Conference.

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre hosts the ABN-Oncology project. Dr Anne Thompson from the Victorian Cancer Biobank and Lisa Devereux from Peter Mac were part of the organising committee for this year's ABN Conference.

Over 85 national and international delegates heard talks around the topics of data linkage and data management, as well as short presentations on a range of issues relevant to biobanking. The keynote speakers for day one of the conference were Professor Paul Fearn from Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Centre in New York and Professor Lyle Palmer from the Western Australia Institute for Medical Research.

Lyle Palmer discussed several large population studies underway in Western Australia. In particular, the need for large numbers of participants, with access to biospecimens and epidemiological information, is providing vital tools in the next phase of the study of human disease: gene discovery linked to clinical and genetic epidemiology. Data linkage across a variety of agencies has been key to the development of the WA Genetic Epidemiology Resource (WAGER). Linking data in a secure manner, which ensures the privacy of the individual, is a key element of WAGER. In Victoria, the Molecular Medicine Informatics Model (MMIM) is linking clinical data with information from the Biobank to enhance cancer research outcomes.

The development of flexible, robust databases was the main focus of Prof Paul Fearn's talk. Paul described the CAISIS system, a scalable, open source web-based database which streamlines data processing for research and integrates research data with clinical practice. CAISIS



was developed in collaboration with numerous investigators and continues to be developed through on-going national and international collaborations.

In the popular "round table" session on day two of the conference, we explored five topics in greater detail: Quality Assurance and Accreditation; Clinical Follow-up; Cost Recovery; Patient Information and Consent Forms in the context of the new National Statement; and Public Awareness and Perspectives. The Biobank's Zoe Squire hosted our discussions on Cost Recovery and Audrey Partanen from the Melbourne Health Biobank site ran a very popular table looking at Quality Assurance and Accreditation. More chairs were required to accommodate the many delegates interested in Audrey's expertise. Peter Mac's Annie Rahilly and Wayne Phillips hosted the Public Awareness table discussions and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research table, respectively. Clinical Follow-up, an important value adding function associated with biobank collections, was expertly led by Dr Anna de Fazio from Westmead Millennium Institute in NSW. The noise level in the room was indicative of the enthusiastic participation in all topics by the delegates. All were reluctant to cease discussion at the end of the session, so much lively debate was had over tea and coffee.

We are seeing an exponential increase in demand from local, national and international research projects for high quality human tissue for research.

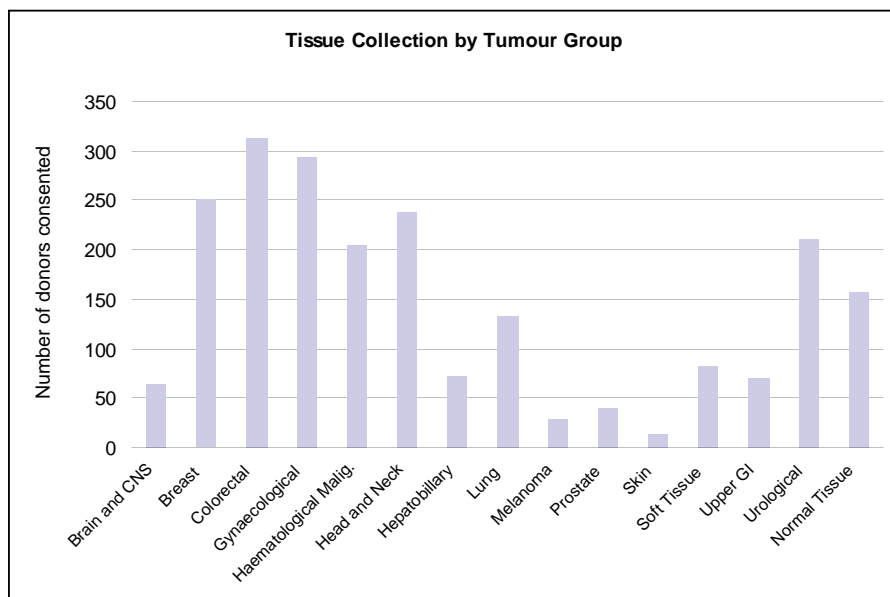
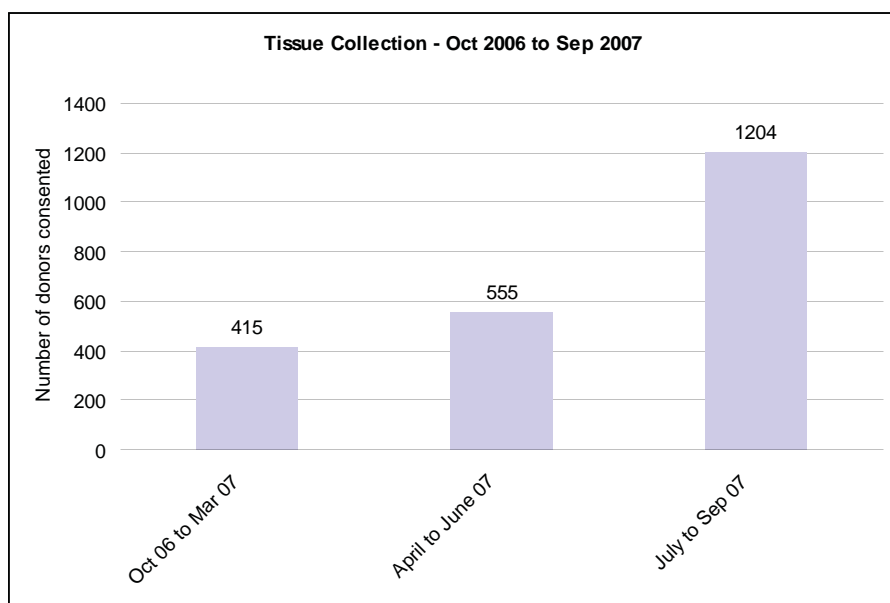
We are seeing an exponential increase in demand from local, national and international research projects for high quality human tissue for research. Victoria is extremely well placed to meet this demand through both the Victorian Cancer Biobank and the ABN. Our commitment to collecting tissue in excess of diagnostic requirements from consenting cancer patients saw eleven members of the Biobank team actively participating in this conference. The opportunity to exchange information and make contact with other biobanking professionals is vital to our ongoing mission: providing high quality biospecimens for high quality research projects that make a positive impact on the way we diagnose and treat our patients.

Lisa Devereux, Tissue Bank Manager, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre (Biobank site) and ABN-Oncology Executive Committee Member



Our Collection

More than 2,000 donors have consented to give their tissue and blood to the Biobank. Biospecimens across all tumour streams are collected along with associated clinical data.



The Victorian Cancer Biobank is a not-for-profit consortium supported by The Cancer Council Victoria and the Victorian Government.

Consortium members are Austin Health, Melbourne Health, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and Southern Health.

Vision

To be the first choice for the supply of cancer tissue to take hypothesis through to discovery.

Core values

Integrity A reliable and ethical approach to biobanking

Excellence The provision of quality biospecimens and service to researchers

Innovation Centralised access to multi-centre collections

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How to Apply

Step 1

Visit the website to read the Information on How to Apply and Conditions of Use.

Step 2

Contact the Biobank to check availability and to discuss your specific needs.

Step 3

Download the Application for Human Biospecimens form from the website. Complete the form and submit. A quote for the cost recovery fee will be forwarded to you. Once we receive confirmation of acceptance of the quote, your application will be processed.

Step 4

The Biobank Access Committee will review your application. Once approved, a Materials Transfer Agreement will be forwarded to you. Upon receipt of the signed MTA, your biospecimens will be dispatched.

