

Research insights into lung diseases focus of new centre

April 11 2014, by Anne Rahilly

Coinciding with the launch of a dedicated Lung Health Research Centre, researchers at the University of Melbourne have discovered a new insight into the unexplained link between lung infections, emphysema and lung cancer.

Recent new findings show a link to a new possible cause of lung cancer, the most common cause of cancer death in men and women in Australia.

Professor Gary Anderson, Director of the Centre said, "Lung diseases such as asthma, [emphysema](#), lung cancer, fibrosis and [lung infections](#) are now amongst the most common and costly disease burdens in Australia and globally,"

Lead investigator Associate Professor Steve Bozinovski found that a blood protein called SAA was greatly elevated in emphysema patients suffering chest infections that could ultimately improve diagnostics for [lung cancer](#).

"Previously we knew that a destructive cell called the "Macrophage" was unusually altered in emphysema. This new discovery shows that the SAA protein causes macrophages to be changed into this "alternative" cell type", " he said.

"Now that we understand this link, we should be able to start understanding why emphysema is so closely linked with cancer," said Associate Professor Bozinovski.

The findings will soon be published in the prestigious *Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB)* journal.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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