

Researchers developing ground-breaking therapeutic cancer vaccine

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Dr Gavin Painter (left) and Professor Richard Furneaux at the Ferrier Research Institute.

A novel way of treating cancer using immunotherapy has been discovered in a joint research venture between Victoria University and the Malaghan Institute of Medical Research, and is on track to being tested on cancer patients.

The director of Victoria's Ferrier Research Institute, Professor Richard Furneaux, says the technology has been patented after successful laboratory trials, and a company called Avalia Immunotherapies has been established to further develop the ground-breaking treatment and progress it to clinical trials.

The discovery, which has been led by Ferrier's Dr Gavin Painter and Dr Ian Hermans from Malaghan, works as a therapeutic vaccine, activating the patient's own immune response to attack [cancer](#) cells in a patient's system.

Gavin says the prospect of the treatment moving into the human trial stage is extremely exciting. "We're very driven by practical outcomes—taking the research from the lab into the real world. Establishing Avalia means we can do that as well as potentially license intellectual property from external providers that might complement our work."

Support for Avalia Immunotherapies has come from New Zealand investment firm Powerhouse Ventures, the New Zealand Venture Investment Fund, the Callaghan Innovation technology-focused incubator programme, the Kiwi Innovation Network (KiwiNet) and Victoria University's commercialisation office Viclink.

Victoria has formalised its relationship with Malaghan, recently signing a collaborative research agreement for chemical immunology. "It's an area of [medical research](#) where Ferrier's high-skill organic and medical chemistry work perfectly alongside Malaghan's leading-edge work in immunology," says Richard.

Richard says the potential benefits of the therapy are huge, not only for [cancer patients](#) but also for the Wellington research community. "This is the first of what we hope is a birth of a biomedical initiative for the

Wellington region—there's fantastic biomedical infrastructure here, from research facilities to the excellent district health boards. We're hoping Wellington will become as well known for its biomedical research as it is for its film industry."

Provided by Victoria University

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