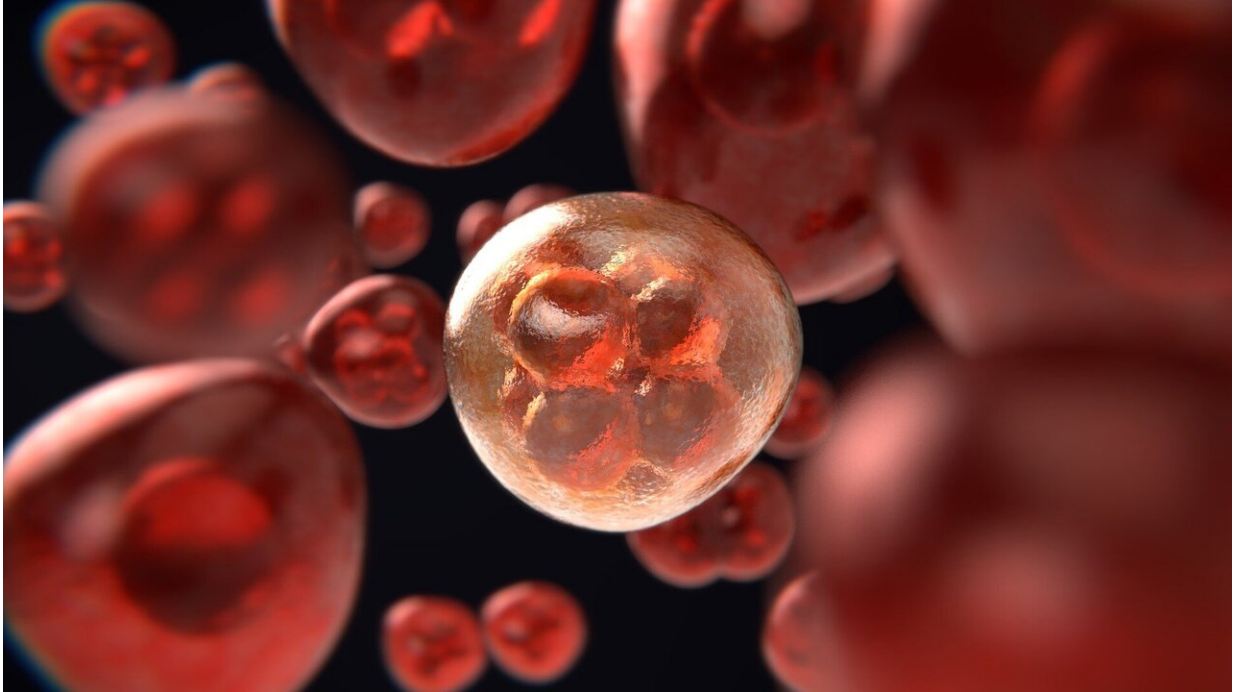


Blood marker may reduce cancer burden

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Researchers at Flinders University are expanding work on a promising blood test model to help predict or diagnose head and neck cancer, a difficult cancer to pick up early and treat.

With [cancer](#) accounting for almost 10 million a year, the Global Burden of Disease report (2017) attributed more than 380,000 deaths to [head](#) and [neck cancer](#).

The Australian research at Flinders University has discovered a blood serum microRNA biomarker signature for oropharyngeal squamous cell carcinoma, recently reported in a new study in the *Journal of Translational Medicine*.

The signature might have potential for the detection of other squamous mucosal Head and Neck cancers, the researchers say, adding the latest development, flowing from previous NHMRC Australian Government funding for developing blood biomarkers for oesophageal cancer, is encouraging.

"MicroRNAs are potential biomarkers for early head and [neck](#) squamous cell cancer diagnosis, prognosis, recurrence, and presence of metastatic disease. However, there is no widespread agreement on a panel of miRNAs with clinically meaningful utility for head and neck squamous cell cancers," says Flinders University researcher Dr. Damian Hussey.

"If our test can be translated to clinic, then it could facilitate surveillance, earlier diagnosis and treatment—including for identifying people with early stage, or at increased risk of developing, Head and Neck cancer," says fellow researcher Associate Professor Eng Ooi.

The latest study used a novel approach to produce a [biomarker](#) signature with good cross validated predictive capacity. Researchers say the results warrant further investigations.

More information: G. C. Mayne et al, Cross validated serum small extracellular vesicle microRNAs for the detection of oropharyngeal squamous cell carcinoma, *Journal of Translational Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1186/s12967-020-02446-1](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12967-020-02446-1)

Provided by Flinders University

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