

CANCER IN THE NEWS MAY 2009

Support: Jones, Swan share story of prostate cancer fight

Last night, prostate cancer survivors Treasurer Wayne Swan and radio host Alan Jones spoke at the launch of a collaborative DVD at Parliament House to help men diagnosed with prostate cancer to choose a treatment.

Mr Swan said he was honoured to lend his name to the work of Professor Phillip Stricker and the St Vincent's Prostate Cancer Centre who were leading the fight to treat patients and find a cure.

Canberra Times, 28/5/09, p10; Adelaide Advertiser, 28/5/09, p28

Treatment: Drug offers hope on prostate tumours

A prostate cancer pill that shrinks tumours in more than two-thirds of men while relieving their pain could be available within two years, according to British scientists.

Urologists believe the drug abiraterone is one of the most significant developments in the treatment of advanced prostate cancer, reducing tumours and prolonging life expectancy in patients who until now have had few treatment options.

Results published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* this week show that 70% of men responded to the drug, with two-thirds showing "significant benefits" for an average of eight months, with scans showing their tumours reduced in size.

Lead researcher Johann de Bono said abiraterone could be licensed as early as 2011. The drug works by stopping the production of key hormones that are known to drive the growth of prostate cancer.

"The patients involved in this trial remained pain-free for an average of about eight months, a brilliant result for those with aggressive prostate cancer and their families...For about a third of men the benefit lasted more than 18 months."

West Australian, 28/5/09, p3; Courier Mail, 28/5/09, p21

Treatment: Scanning showdown

Nearly 100 Tasmanians have unnecessarily been forced to fly to Melbourne for cancer scanning, says the operator of the state's only PET scanner.

At least 96 patients, some elderly pensioners, have been sent interstate to check the progress of their cancer despite a \$3 million PET scanner clinic being available at the Hobart Private Hospital.

Medical imaging company MIA Tasmania accused the Royal Hobart Hospital of sending people interstate as part of its bid to get its own PET scanner.

General manager Mark Simpson said 272 Tasmanians had had a scan at the Jim Bacon PET centre at the Hobart Private since it opened in November. About 60 have been public patients.

"It's disappointing that the Royal Hobart Hospital has to resort to disadvantaging patients to further their desire to get new equipment."

Health and human Services Minister Lara Giddings said patients were being sent interstate because the service was too expensive and did not run every day. Ms Giddings said a new scanner would be bought and installed at the Royal Hobart Hospital.

Hobart Mercury, 28/5/09, p9

Treatment: \$14m boost to ease recovery pain (WA)

Health Minister Kim Hames yesterday announced a \$14 million funding boost to palliative care services across the State over the next four years.

The program aims to help children and adults access palliative care in their own homes and facilities in the community, such as the Bendat Family Comprehensive Cancer Centre at St John of God Hospital in Subiaco.

West Australian, 27/5/09, p18

Tobacco: Boomers drag the chain on quitting

More than 20% of South Australian smokers have quit the habit in the past decade, research has found. Baby boomers, however, have been singled out as the one group that is ignoring the health warnings with almost no change in the smoking rates of 45 to 59 year olds.

The group that has most altered its habits are those in the 60 year-plus category, with the prevalence dropping by 40%.

Quit SA says the trends are a consequence of higher prices, a ban on advertising, smoke-free pubs and graphic health campaigns. But Quit SA manager David Edwards believes growing up with imagery including the "Marlboro Man" makes it more difficult for baby boomers to butt out.

The experts believe large numbers of over 60s are quitting as they face their mortality. The Cancer Council undertook the two face-to-face surveys of about 3000 regular and occasional smokers in 1998 and last year. It found smoking rates had dropped from 25.3% of SA's population to 19.9%.

Adelaide Advertiser, 26/5/09, p13

Alcohol: Liberal plan to tax all alcohol

The price of all alcoholic drinks should be lifted under a compromise deal being offered by the Federal Opposition to agree to pass the Government's controversial alcopops tax hike through the Senate.

A broad-based rise in the price of alcohol comes on top of a separate Opposition proposal to lift cigarette prices by 12.5% to keep the Private Health Insurance rebate open to high-income earners.

Opposition frontbencher Peter Dutton has suggested that raising the price of all alcohol will help prevent binge drinking.

Adelaide Advertiser, 25/5/09, p15

Public health: Children hit by ovarian, breast cancer

Australian girls as young as four are being diagnosed with ovarian cancer, but experts say the cases are very rare and parents should not be alarmed. They say concerns may have been fuelled by overseas cases of young girls developing breast and ovarian cancers...but they generally make up less than 1% of cases.

Figures show that on average 5 Australian girls under 15 are diagnosed with breast or ovarian cancer every year, with one case a year found in a girl under 10.

Cancer Council WA director of education and research Terry Slevin said ovarian cancer in girls under 20 made up about 1% of all cases nationally, while breast cancer in the same age group was extremely rare, less than 0.1% of cases.

National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre chief executive officer Helen Zorbas said breast and ovarian cancers that developed in younger girls tended to be different from those in adult women. "They tend to be much less aggressive and have a better outcome when they occur in girls," she said.

West Australian, 23/5/09, p18

Skin: Natural gene shield hope on melanoma

WA researchers could be a step closer to preventing and treating melanoma by finding genes which offer natural protection against the deadly skin cancer. A new WA Institute for Medical Research study will hunt for genes that may protect the body against melanoma in a bid to unlock natural prevention and treatment for melanoma, which kills more than 1200 Australians a year.

It is one of two projects to be awarded the first Scott Kirkbridge Melanoma Research Centre research grants. Researchers Grant Morahan said the \$100,000 grant would aid understanding of how melanoma evades the immune system.

West Australian, 23/5/09, p5

Tobacco: Tobacco chiefs lied about risk (international)

A US federal appeals court has ruled the tobacco industry deceived smokers by labelling some cigarettes as "light" when they posed just as high a health risk as other brands.

The appeals court on Friday confirmed a ruling by a lower court in August 2006 that tobacco companies lied for years about the dangerous effects of such cigarettes.

It upheld the earlier decision that the companies must remove misleading statements such as "light" or "natural" from cigarette packs.

The company bosses knew about "the harmfulness of second smoke and the concept of smoker compensation, which makes light cigarettes no less harmful than regular cigarettes and possibly more," the appeals court said.

But the court rejected pleas to force tobacco companies to fund a national anti-smoking campaign or pay a fine equivalent to the profits raked in from light cigarettes.

Sunday Telegraph, 24/5/09, p41; Sunday Times, 24/5/09, p44; Sunday Mail Brisbane, 24/5/09, p47

Tobacco: Tobacco laws are too costly: shopkeepers (NSW)

Convenience stores will be forced to pay up to \$10,000 to comply with the State Government's new tobacco display regulations, according to a new report. Under the new laws, the Government will force small retailers to hide packets of cigarettes behind their counters so they are not visible to customers. The report, by Deloitte, predicts it will cost between \$6000 and \$10,000 for each shop owner to comply with the regulations. However, experts says in many cases tobacco companies will foot the bill for the new display cases. Australian Association of Convenience Stores executive director David Killeen, who commissioned the Deloitte report, said the Government had failed to address the financial impact of the regulations on store owners. But University of Sydney public health professor Simon Chapman said tobacco companies paid for most, if not all, the cigarette storage units in stores.

Sun Herald, 24/5/09, p30

Tobacco: Fewer smoke now, but those who do are young

Smoking rates have dropped by a fifth in Victoria over the past 10 years, thanks to higher cigarette prices, bans on tobacco advertising and graphic health campaigns. A report released by Cancer Council Victoria yesterday also showed smoking rates had fallen to an all-time low for women, from 17.5% in 1998 to 14.7% last year. For men, the rate fell from 25% in 1998 to 18.5% last year. Overall, the random survey of 3000 people showed that 6.5% of them smoked regularly in 2008. People aged 18 to 29 are still the most likely to smoke, with 22.3% of them regularly smoking last year. The group was closely followed by those aged 30 to 49, of which 18.8% were regular smokers. The director of the council's Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer, Melanie Wakefield, said the trends reflected the introduction of anti-tobacco measures, including a total ban on traditional tobacco advertising, higher prices, graphic warnings on packets and regular mass-media campaigns. The report was released to coincide with the launch of a new, graphic advertising campaign, which will begin airing on television from Sunday night.

Age, 22/5/09, p3

Tobacco: Uni ban on students smoking outdoors

Outdoor smoking has been banned at the University of South Australia's two city campuses. It is the first university in the state to make the move. The decision, announced to staff and students in an email yesterday, pushes smokers into two designated smoking bays on each campus. Business pro vice chancellor Professor Gerry Griffin, said other universities were likely to follow. "I suspect if they hear we're doing it, there'll be a bit of pressure from their militant non-smokers as well," he said. Quit SA manager David Edwards praised UniSA's stance. "It's welcome and to be commended and other universities should be thinking seriously along the same lines," he said.

Adelaide Advertiser, 22/5/09, p7

Treatment: Sydney Uni drops radiation therapy course

The University of Sydney will drop its undergraduate course in radiation therapy from next year, raising fears of a shortage of trained workers. The university will continue with a qualification in radiation therapy at postgraduate level, which means students first must complete a three-year undergraduate qualification, such as a science degree. A spokesman for the university said the change was in line with a move towards graduate entry for many of its professional degrees. Michael Barton, professor of radiation oncology at the University of NSW, said radiation therapy was taught only at the universities of Sydney and Newcastle. "This change will prolong...training and greatly reduce the number of people going into training," he said.

Cancer Council NSW CEO Dr Andrew Penman, says the number of linear accelerators used for radiotherapy needs to increase from 42 to 76 by 2015, as the population ages. A third of cancer patients who could benefit from radiation therapy do not receive it, he said, and about 51,000 people missed out on adequate radiation treatment in the 10 years to 2006. *Sydney Morning Herald, 22/5/09, p6*

Research: Cell link to deadly diseases

The tiny "recycling unit" at the core of every human cell can fail and research increasingly is placing this malfunction at the root of common, deadly illnesses.

Alzheimer's disease, stroke, heart disease and certain cancers all can be linked to a dysfunction of the lysosome, SA biochemical geneticist Professor John Hopwood says.

"The more we study these disorders, it turns out the lysosome has a big role to play in many illnesses that the community has," he says.

Adelaide Advertiser, 21/5/09, p4

Support: Plea over asbestos shortfall

James Hardie asbestos victims have intensified pressure on the federal and state governments to provide short-term emergency financing to the embattled compensation fund, after the company revealed future payments were now in doubt.

The company said yesterday it would not make a contribution this year to the Asbestos Injuries Compensation Fund. The fund is facing a shortfall of up to \$160 million, after an increase in the number and value of claims made by asbestos victims in the past year.

The dire outlook for victims worsened after a new report by auditors KPMG found the fund's liabilities had grown from \$1.42 billion to \$1.78 billion as the result of more compensation claims. In the past year, there were 298 claims for mesothelioma.

James Hardie chief executive Louis Gries could not say if the company would record a positive cashflow in the next year.

Australian, 21/5/09, p6

Obesity: cancer now a weighty issue

Obesity's role in causing cancer is not enough to convince South Australians to shed weight, the Cancer Council says. The Cancer Council says community awareness of the link between cancer and obesity has grown by almost 20% in the past four years but obesity levels have continued to rise.

Cancer Council SA chief executive Associate Professor Brenda Wilson says weight loss is the new challenge when it comes to preventing cancer.

"The obesity epidemic is going to have a huge impact on our health, with many diseases such as cancer predicted to rise, unless we manage to reverse the culture of obesity which seems to have taken hold," Associate Professor Wilson said.

Adelaide Advertiser, 20/5/09

Tobacco: TV Quit ads show loved ones' loss and misery

WA cancer experts will launch a confronting anti-smoking campaign today that shows the misery of lung cancer not just from the point of view of smokers but also the family members they leave behind.

The Cancer Council WA campaign features Perth brothers Luke and Ben Eliot who lost their father Neil to the smoking-related lung disease in 2007 at the age of 52.

In a series of television advertisements, the brothers describe how they cared for Neil in the 12 months between his cancer diagnosis and his death.

While previous campaigns have showed the graphic reality of lung disease in smokers, the Eliot campaign shows the loss caused by smoking passing down the generations.

West Australians, 20/5/09, p9

Public health: Human rights test case for gene patents

A lawsuit led by one of the largest civil rights groups in the United States is set to position the issue of human gene patents in the realm of human rights.

Specialists say the outcome could guide Australia's largely untested position on gene patents, which has allowed the granting of an estimated 15,000 gene-related patents.

The American Civil Liberties Union, with a number of organisations and individuals, has filed a lawsuit, alleging patents on two human genes associated with breast and ovarian cancer

“stifle research that could lead to cures and limit women’s options regarding their medical care”.

The lawsuit, filed in the US District Court for the Southern District of New York, is against the US Patent and Trademark Office and the BRCA genes’ patent holders, biopharmaceutical company Myriad Genetics, and the University of Utah Research Foundation.

ANU Centre for Governance of Knowledge and Development biotechnology patent specialist Luigi Palombi said the outcome of the case would not have a direct impact on Australian law. But if the challenge was successful, it would send a clear message to the nation that the practice IP Australia had adopted was wrong.

Canberra Times, 19/5/09, p6

Skin: Peplin ‘positive’ on trial of sun spot treatment

Skin treatment specialist Peplin has reported “positive” results from a late-stage clinical trial of its gel to treat pre-cancerous sun spots. It says it is on track to have the product on the market by early 2011.

Brisbane-based Peplin yesterday released the results of a phase III trial in the use of its weed-derived gel, PEP005, to treat actinic keratosis lesions on arms, body and legs.

Among the 255 patients from Australia and the US, the median reduction in the number of lesions was 66.7%, with 27.4% of patients having all of their lesions successfully treated.

Age, 19/5/09, p4; Courier Mail, 19/5/09, p55; Northern Territory News, 19/5/09, p9; Herald Sun, 19/5/09, p26

Tobacco: Low-tar cigarettes linked to rising cancer risk

It may be riskier on the lungs to smoke cigarettes now than it was a few decades ago – at least in the US – according to new research that blames changes in cigarette design for fuelling a certain type of lung cancer.

University of California at San Diego’s David Burns told a recent meeting of tobacco researchers that up to half of the US’s lung cancer cases might be due to those changes.

It’s not the first time scientists have concluded the 1960s movement for lower-tar cigarettes brought some unexpected consequences. But this study, while preliminary, is among the most in-depth.

It found the increase in a kind of lung tumour called adenocarcinoma was higher in the US than in Australia, even though both countries switched to milder cigarettes at the same time.

“The most likely explanation for it is a change in the cigarette,” Dr Burns said. He cited a difference: cigarettes sold in Australia contained lower levels of nitrosamines, a known carcinogen, than those in the US.

It was circumstantial evidence that required more research, he acknowledged. The study was presented at a meeting of the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco.

Canberra Times, 19/5/09, p8

Tobacco: Health bonus in Lib smoke tax

The Government’s quick-fire analysis of Malcolm Turnbull’s proposal to increase cigarette tax instead of means-testing the private health insurance rebate fails to take into account the benefit to the public hospital system of reducing smoking rates, the Opposition Leader says.

While not ruling out adopting Mr Turnbull’s idea to increase tobacco excise, the Government has released Treasury figures showing the slug on smokers would generate \$3.2 billion less in revenue over the next 10 years than restricting the 30% private health insurance rebate.

But Mr Turnbull questioned the accuracy of such long-term projections and pointed out the broader benefit of increasing the incentives for smokers to shake their habit. “If many, many more people give up smoking and the tobacco tax generates less income than anticipated, five, six, seven, eight, nine years in the future, I say that’s a terrific problem to have because we’ll have a healthier Australia.”

West Australian, 19/5/09, p12

Prevention: Gardasil indication wider

The quadrivalent HPV vaccine Gardasil is now indicated for older women. The Therapeutic Goods Administration has approved the extension of the vaccine’s indication to encompass females aged 9-45 years for the prevention of cervical cancer, precancerous or dysplastic lesions, and genital warts caused by HPV types 6, 11, 16 and 18.

Australian Doctor, 15/5/09, p6

Public health: Hub of research

Queensland is a step closer to becoming the medical research hub of Australia with three major health infrastructure announcements in the Federal Budget.

Queensland patients with cancer, diabetes, obesity and musculoskeletal disease will benefit from a new medical research centre – the Smart Therapies Institute – receiving \$40 million over four years.

The six-storey centre is a collaboration between the University of Queensland, Mater medical Research Institute, Princess Alexandra Hospital, Queensland University of Technology and the Queensland Government.

Sunday Mail Brisbane, 17/5/09, p26

Tobacco: Smokers hopes up in smoke

Smokers are really in trouble – the political parties are ganging up in favour of introducing higher cigarette taxes. Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon gave cautious support yesterday to the Opposition's proposal to increase the tax by about a dollar a pack.

"I certainly agree that tax measures can have a health impact. Of course, that can apply to tobacco. We've seen, in terms of history, Australia has done successfully on that."

The major parties appear to be working out a deal to lift "vice taxes" on both alcopop drinks and cigarettes.

The Government wants to increase the tax on alcopops, the opposition wants to lift the tax on cigarettes. Ms Roxon said if the opposition passed the alcopops price rise, then she would look at its tobacco proposal.

The Opposition's anti-tobacco plan would push up the price of a packet of cigarettes by 12.5%, from \$13.85 to \$14.85 – or about 3 cents a cigarette.

The Greens say they'd support such a move. Mr Turnbull appears to have had a change of heart on the alcopops tax and now says he'll take a fresh look, reiterating his softer stance yesterday.

Daily Telegraph, 18/5/09, p3; Herald Sun, 18/5/09, p9; Canberra Times, 18/5/09, p1; Hobart Mercury, 18/5/09, p11

Tobacco: Coalition plan is smoke and mirrors

Opposition Leader Malcolm Turnbull's proposed hike in cigarette tax would fall \$3.3 billion short over a decade as a revenue source compared with the budget's means test on the private health insurance rebate, according to Treasury figures.

The Government says the means test is a structural reform that will save a growing amount, while the cigarette tax will be flat.

The Treasury analysis calculates that by 2019-20 the cigarette tax increase would provide about \$700 million a year less than the means test savings – under half the estimated savings from the means test.

Age, 18/5/09, p4; West Australian, 18/5/09, p10; Australian Financial Review, 18/5/09, p1

Tobacco: Baccy tax 'should hit alcopops too'

Malcolm Turnbull has won plaudits from health groups for his proposed hike in cigarette taxes and has opened the door for the first time to compromise on a higher alcopops excise.

Cancer Council Australia CEO Professor Ian Olver welcomed the policy announcement, which would increase cigarette prices by about 3c a stick. He said every 10% jump in tobacco prices translated to a 4% decline in average tobacco consumption.

"We know that's the most effective way of driving down the smoking rate," Professor Olver said. "Not only do you get revenue from the tax, you also get the health benefit from less smoking-related disease."

Professor Olver said, however, that the decision to back higher prices as a driver of behavioural change should extend beyond cigarettes to alcohol.

Weekend Australian, 16/5/09, p7

Tobacco: Ads fail to convince smokers

As millions of dollars continue to be spent on anti-tobacco advertising, an Australian study has been the first to identify the ads are not making smokers quit.

The findings were presented at the Heart Foundation conference in Brisbane last week. University of Sydney researcher Emily Kothe said previous studies had not combined the two key aspects of tobacco cravings and the negative images in anti-smoking ads.

The study participants included smokers and ex-smokers aged 18-26.

“Anti-smoking advertisements have been proven to be effective in stopping people taking up smoking, but getting established smokers to quit is more challenging and that’s what we were most interested in,” Ms Kothe said.

The study measured the urge to smoke before and after the test in which participants were shown an anti-smoking advertisement or a general, non-health-related audio-visual package. “Results show the advertising led to a 16% decrease in cravings among smokers, ex-smokers experienced no change in cravings pre or post the test and smokers who did not see the advertisement experienced a 12% increase in cravings over the same period,” Ms Kothe said. Despite the reduction in cravings, some participants felt the ads were not credible and that illnesses were unlikely to affect them.

Sunday Tasmanian, 17/5/09, p4; Sunday Territorian, 17/5/09, p3; Sunday Times, 17/5/09, p29; Courier Mail, 16/5/09, p7

Treatment: Genes found to affect chemo response

A Brisbane scientist has predicted genetics will play an increasing role in the way doctors prescribe drugs after finding a gene linked to how women with ovarian cancer respond to chemotherapy.

Geneticist Georgia Chenevix-Trench, of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research, led an international study that analysed two common variations of the human ABCB1 gene, in more than 300 Australian ovarian cancer patients and another 900 from Britain.

It found women with the most common form of the ABCB1 gene relapsed much faster after upfront chemotherapy than other women.

Half of the women with the most frequently occurring form of the gene had relapsed within 18 months, nine months faster than those with a less common variant.

The research was recently published in the *Clinical Cancer Research* journal.

Courier Mail, 18/5/09, p11

Treatment: Ginger offers chemotherapy relief

Ginger reduced by 40% the sick feeling of cancer patients taking chemotherapy, a study has found. Patients who took ginger with an anti-nausea drug reported improvement on the first day after chemotherapy, compared with patients who got the drug and a placebo, said Julie Ryan, the study’s lead author.

Age, 16/5/09, p18

Tobacco: We’ll block health rebate test – Libs

Opposition Leader Malcolm Turnbull has launched the biggest gamble of his political career by deciding to vote against a key revenue measure in the Government’s Budget.

Mr Turnbull vowed to block the new income test for the 30% private health insurance rebate.

Mr Turnbull has had to find alternative savings to replace the Government’s means test which would pump \$1.9 billion into federal coffers over four years.

To do that, Mr Turnbull wants smokers to pay through an increase in cigarette taxes. “Raise \$1.9 billion by making health more expensive and putting more pressure on the public hospital system, or by adding about 3c more to the price of cigarettes and taking pressure off the public health system,” Mr Turnbull said.

Adelaide Advertiser, 15/5/09, p4; Daily Telegraph, 15/5/09, p2

Tobacco: Health staff happy to stub out

Doctors and nurses at Royal Darwin Hospital and other Health Department institutions support a ban on smoking at their workplaces, according to an internal survey.

A Health Department questionnaire showed about 75% of its staff wanted smoking banned.

Its new smoke free policy will be introduced on July 1.

The policy will ban smoking in all of the department’s facilities, including hospital campuses, community and remote health centres, NT Families and Children offices, and work cars.

Northern Territory News, 15/5/09, p7

Detection: Prostate hope on the way

Scientists are closer to developing a more accurate test for prostate cancer, which could save hundreds from surgery every year. Scientists say a simple urine test could be developed to identify those patients who need further treatment.

Writing in the *British Journal of Cancer*, they explained that tiny globules of fat in men's urine contain RNA molecules which could indicate whether the cancer is aggressive.

These molecules are carried from the tumour out of the body in fatty capsules called exosomes. For the first time, scientists have discovered that different genes are switched on and off in aggressive and dormant prostate cancers.

They also found that genetic material carried in the exosomes comes from tumours.

Courier Mail, 14/5/09, p29; West Australian, 14/5/09, p13

Public health: Cancer facilities to aid rural patients

Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Wagga Wagga and Wollongong are likely winners in the Federal Government's \$560 million plan to build a network of 10 regional cancer centres, the head of the Cancer Council says.

Professor Ian Olver said only these towns, as well as a few in Victoria and Queensland, have the population density to warrant the construction of an integrated clinic that combines surgery, radiotherapy and medical oncology services.

Building capacity on the ground in regional areas, rather than increasing schemes to transport patients to metropolitan hospitals, was championed by the Cancer Council and the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia as the best way to reduce the disparity in cancer outcomes between people in rural areas and cities.

"It is an unprecedented move by a Commonwealth Government to show such a strong commitment to a national problem that has been well-documented, but until now has been seen largely as a state and territory issues," Professor Olver said.

Major towns that already boast multi-million dollar radiation oncology machines, such as Wagga Wagga, Bendigo, Ballarat, La Trobe Valley and Townsville, would be best suited for expansion, the Cancer Council says.

Each region will be linked to Sydney's new Lifecare cancer centre or Parkville in Melbourne, which will provide state-of-the-art cancer treatment for rare and complex cancers.

Sydney Morning Herald, 14/5/09, p8

Treatment: Statins 'cut cancers'

Common cholesterol-lowering drugs could also protect against lung cancer and emphysema, New Zealand researchers have found. A review of more than 90 scientific papers involving over 750,000 patients showed people taking statins (cholesterol-lowering drugs) were 30-50% less likely to be diagnosed with lung cancer, the researchers from the University of Auckland and Auckland City Hospital said.

Up to 50% of people were also less likely to die of complications of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, also known as smoker's lung or emphysema.

Researcher Associate Professor Robert Young said although randomised controlled trials had yet to be done, the review showed compelling evidence that statins significantly reduced the risk of lung cancer.

Canberra Times, 14/5/09, p14

Treatment: Cancer drug beats reactions

Women with advanced breast cancer now have access to a government-funded nanoparticle anti-cancer drug that prolongs survival and causes fewer side effects than traditional chemotherapy drugs.

For the past three months, more than 100 women who have breast cancer that has spread have been given free access to Abraxane by the distributor, Specialised Therapeutics Australia, while it waited for the drug to be listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, a move that was approved this month.

Abraxane is solvent-free and contains the human protein albumin, reducing side effects and allergic reactions.

West Australian, 14/5/09, p13

Public health: Billions for fight against cancer

A wide-ranging \$2 billion plan will tackle cancer at state-of-the-art research centres. The Government yesterday unveiled its unprecedented spending to fight cancer, with medical infrastructure the plan's centrepiece.

At least \$1.3 billion will be spent over six years for two integrated cancer centres in Sydney and Melbourne, plus a network of up to 10 centres for people in regional and remote areas. The new Lifehouse Sydney Cancer Centre at Sydney's Royal Prince Alfred Hospital will get \$100 million, and Melbourne's Parkville Comprehensive Cancer Centre has been granted \$426 million. About \$70 million will be given to expand Sydney's Garvan St Vincent's Cancer Centre.

Health Minister Nicola Roxon has yet to determine where 10 regional centres will be based under a \$560 million injection.

And as more women combat breast cancer, Ms Roxon has gifted BreastScreen Australia with \$120 million to replace outdated equipment.

More money will be spent on subsidising drugs – targeting bowel, kidney and breast cancer. Clinicians and researchers will have access to a greater pool of money for research, and \$2.6 million will be put on the table to fund up to 24 new cancer support groups.

Courier Mail, 13/5/09, p50; Daily Telegraph, 13/5/09, p6

Public health: Healthy nation

Overweight Australians will benefit from almost \$900 million to make them healthy. The Government will give each state money to develop health prevention programs. Smokers, drinkers and overweight children will be targeted in the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health which will deliver education programs. Pre-schools and childcare centres will receive funding to encourage exercise and healthy eating among toddlers.

Daily Telegraph, 13/5/09, p6

Detection: Cancer tests flawed from faulty kits

The federal Government has been forced to defend its bowel cancer screening program after almost half a million people received a faulty bowel cancer testing kit and will need to take the test again.

It emerged yesterday that 475,000 Japanese-made testing kits provided to Australians since December last year were not accurately diagnosing the disease.

The kits were provided to all 50-, 55- and 65-year olds as part of the Department of Health and Ageing's National Bowel Cancer Screening program.

But while the department said last night that Australians could have "full confidence" in its self-testing cancer program, health experts said the regime had serious limitations and needed to be overhauled.

Terry Bolin, president of the Gut Foundation and associate professor of medicine at the University of NSW, claims the effectiveness of the self-test kits is questionable.

"This is an opportunity for the Government to go back to the drawing board and re-look at the guidelines," he said. Dr Bolin said the kits had always had problems, including returning false negative/positive results. He believed there were more effective tests available.

Dr Bolin said a once every two years self-testing regime reduced bowel cancer mortality only by about 20%, while a colonoscopy once every five to 10 years could reduce mortality by 76 to 90%.

Last night, the Department of Health and Ageing released a statement, pledging that new test kits would be made available as soon as possible.

The Government is looking into the liability of the supplier, Dorevitch Pathology, to verify the cause of the problem and ensure reliable tests are available as soon as possible.

Anyone who received a test before December 1 is not affected by the problem, even if they returned a sample after that date.

Australian, 12/5/09, p4; Age, 12/5/09, p3; Canberra Times, 12/5/09, p4; West Australian, 12/5/09, p1; Sydney Morning Herald, 12/5/09, p1; Courier Mail, 12/5/09, p7

Environment: Pesticides banned in Europe still sold here

Toxic chemicals about to be deregistered or already banned in the European Union remain widely available in Australia and can be found in everything from pet flea collars to head lice treatments for children.

An investigation by consumer group Choice found eight of the pesticides, including chlorpyrifos, permethrin, allethrin, bioallethrin, bioresmethrin, malathion/maldison, pyriproxyfen and fenoxycarb were still used in everyday products such as cockroach baits, ant killers, head lice shampoo, flea collars and mosquito coils.

Choice said these chemicals, known as endocrine-disruptors, had been linked to health problems ranging from acute childhood leukaemia and other cancers to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and effects on the reproductive and immune systems.

Choice wanted to see the burden of proof put on manufacturers and importers to show that a chemical was safe, rather than giving them the benefit of the doubt.

West Australian, 12/5/09, p3

Obesity: Obesity spreads amid calls for action

Adults and children, especially boys, are getting fatter, a national survey shows. It also found dangerous levels of drinking among teenagers.

The National Health Survey, released yesterday by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, counters recent claims that childhood obesity levels have levelled out.

The survey found a significant increase in the proportion of obese children, from 5.2% in 1995 to 7.8% in 2007-08. The rise was entirely among boys – almost 10% were obese, compared with 4.5% a decade ago.

Adults are also expanding. Using the body mass index yardstick, 68% of men and 55% of women are overweight or obese, an increase from 64% and 49% respectively a decade ago. A policy advisor at the Obesity Policy Coalition, Jane Martin, said the data was worrying and called for more action by governments, such as “traffic light” labels on food packaging, restrictions on junk food marketing to children and even a tax on unhealthy food.

The survey also looked at health-risk factors and found more than a third of the population had had no exercise at all (apart from work-related activity) in the fortnight before the survey. This was not a significant change from the previous survey in 2004-05.

There was also no change in the proportion of people who drank alcohol at risky levels.

Age, 12/5/09, p4; West Australian, 12/5/09, p18; Herald Sun, 12/5/09, p12

Prevention: Cancer shot reduced sex disease rate

Australia's cervical cancer vaccine program is being credited for a dramatic reduction in the rate of a common sexually transmitted condition in young women.

Figures from the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, part of The Alfred hospital, show that the national HPV vaccination program has resulted in lower rates of the cancer-causing virus and has halved cases of genital warts in young women.

Melbourne Sexual Health Centre director Christopher Fairley said, “The findings are promising for a predicted reduction in cervical cancers and pre-cancers as a result of the vaccination program.”

West Australian, 9/5/09, p17

Public health: \$28m for cancer centre in ACT

Almost \$28 million will be set aside in the federal budget to establish a regional cancer centre at the Canberra Hospital.

The integrated cancer centre and research centre will be built around the recently expanded and refurbished radiation oncology facility at the city's major public hospital.

The new centre will also serve as a hub for rural and regional outreach services, cancer support programs and immunology.

The aim is to improve access to quality cancer services for people living in the ACT and south-east NSW as well as improve outcomes for people diagnosed with the disease.

The funding to be allocated in Tuesday's budget will come from the Government's \$10 billion health and hospital fund.

It is understood the Canberra Hospital project was part of the Rudd Government's plan to modernise cancer services, improving the treatment and survival rates for about 100,000 Australians diagnosed with cancer every year.

Canberra Times, 9/5/09, p1

Public health: Pratt's \$1m gift of life

This week, the Pratt Foundation will announce a \$1 million grant to help establish a "survivorship" centre at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne. More than 250,000 patients are expected to benefit.

The centre, an Australian first, will become the hub of a cancer survivorship program that focuses on patient care and recovery.

Associate Professor Michael Jefford, deputy head of the Department of Medical Oncology at the centre, said the cure rate of cancers was now above 60%. "The aim of the centre will be leadership, but also to provide services such as follow-up, training staff, education for patients and research."

Sunday Herald Sun, 10/5/09, p3

Skin: Solarium licenses (NSW)

Solarium operators will be forced into a registration scheme and banned from claiming that sunbeds are safe for tanning under stronger regulations announced by the NSW Government today.

The new laws, to come into force within weeks, will also introduce fines of up to \$11,000. Draft regulations made public in December proposed a ban on solarium use for people under 18 and those assessed as fair-skinned, but skin cancer advocates argued the rules were weak without some form of licensing system for solarium businesses.

Sydney Morning Herald, 11/5/09, p2

Tobacco: Smokes fines not a police priority (WA)

WA Police were unlikely to take the details of even one person a day for smoking in cars carrying children, Police Commissioner Karl O'Callaghan said yesterday. Mr O'Callaghan said the new laws would not be a priority for his officers.

He did not expect them to stop more cars than South Australian police who have handed out 334 infringements at a rate of one every second day since similar laws were introduced almost two years ago.

Legislation banning smoking in alfresco areas of restaurants and cafes, in cars carrying children under 17, within 10m of playgrounds and between the flags at beaches passed through the Legislative Assembly on Thursday.

West Australian, 9/5/09, p12; Adelaide Advertiser, 9/5/09, p46

Treatment: Breast cancer drug aids few

The landmark breast cancer drug Herceptin was suitable for only a small percentage of women with breast cancer tumours, University of WA professor of surgery Christobel Saunders said.

A study in the first year after the anti-cancer weapon was listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme showed that just 7% of the 468 breast cancer patients at Royal Perth and Sir Charles Gairdner hospital were deemed suitable for the drug.

Addressing the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' Annual Scientific Congress in Brisbane on Saturday, Professor Saunders said the results were mainly because most tumours were not of the type that responded to the drug. Other reasons included age, metastases, patient choice and whether the breast cancer patient also had other disease.

West Australian, 11/5/09, p17

Tobacco: Speaker backs ban on MPs smoking (WA)

Lower House Speaker Grant Woodhams said yesterday he was in favour of banning smoking in the grounds of State Parliament and would discuss the issue with the incoming Legislative Council president at the end of the month.

"When the president is elected, one of my first conversations I want to have with him is what his feeling is on smoking on the grounds of Parliament," he said.

But Mr Woodhams, who along with the Upper House's president determines rules applying in the parliamentary precinct, said while personally in favour of a ban he recognised the addictive nature of tobacco and the need to phase out smoking areas gradually.

Professor Mike Daube, from Curtin University's health policy unit, said that despite smoking only being allowed in a designated area, politicians were still exposing themselves and their guests to the dangers of passive smoking.

Premier Colin Barnett said it was a decision for Parliament on whether to ban smoking within the parliamentary precinct.

West Australian, 8/5/09, p14

Detection: Push for breast MRI

A growing number of experts say all women with newly diagnosed breast cancer should have an MRI scan because mammography and ultrasound fail to detect all tumours.

Because of its high sensitivity, preoperative MRIs could detect lesions that might otherwise be missed, Associate Professor Bruno Giuffre, senior radiologist at North Shore Private Hospital told *Australian Doctor*.

"It is helping women and their surgeons to make more confident choices between conservative therapy and more extensive breast surgery," he said.

Also supporting this view, Dr Paul Crea, a surgical oncologist specialising in breast cancer at St Vincent's Clinic in Sydney, said his recent trial of 50 breast cancer patients had seen additional lesions detected on MRI in several women whose management was then altered. But others such as Dr Nehmat Houssami, from the school of public health at the University of Sydney, believe the high false positive rate of MRIs may lead to unnecessarily radical surgery. For more information see the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

Australian Doctor, 8/5/09, p2

Public health: New cancer centre gets go-ahead

Melbourne's long-awaited Comprehensive Cancer Centre will be approved today. The project is expected to be launched with a grant of up to \$400 million from the Federal Government's Health and Hospitals Fund, and a similar amount from state coffers.

The rest of the estimated \$1 billion cost will be paid by research organisations, which will be partners in the project.

The announcement will be made jointly by federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon and state Health Minister Daniel Andrews.

The centre will be built on the triangular site in Parkville where a disused dental hospital now stands across the road from the Royal Melbourne and Royal Women's hospitals.

It will incorporate an expanded Peter MacCallum moved from its East Melbourne site. All three hospitals will collaborate to treat Victorian cancer patients, research new treatments and cures, and train future cancer clinicians, scientists and researchers.

The Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research will be housed in the new building alongside a new University of Melbourne cancer research and education centre. The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute is also a key partner.

Age, 7/5/09, p7; Herald Sun, 7/5/09, p2

Public health: Cancer spike to hit elderly (international)

The number of new cancer cases in the US will grow 45% over the next 20 years, according to a study in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

While breast, prostate, colon and lung are expected to remain most prevalent, the greatest increase will be in stomach, liver, pancreas and bladder cancer and myeloma.

Modelling predicts a dramatic spike among elderly and minority populations, with a 67% increase in cancer incidence in older Americans, compared with 11% for those under 65.

Australian Financial Review, 7/5/09, p58

Tobacco: \$2000 fine for smoking in cars

West Australians could be fined up to \$2000 for smoking at the beach or in cars carrying children within weeks under tough new laws expected to pass the Lower House of Parliament today. The Bill would also spell the death of almost all cigarette advertising, with displays banned in shops except specialist tobacco retailers, such as cigar stores.

Under a compromise deal announced yesterday, Health Minister Kim Hames said the Liberal-Nationals Government would support Independent MP Janet Woollard's Tobacco Products Control Amendment Bill, after changes which watered down a plan to ban smoking in licensed outdoor areas of hotels. The deal will allow smoking in up to half of these areas.

But smoking would be banned in alfresco areas of restaurants and cafes, in cars carrying children under 17 years, within 10m of playgrounds and between the flags at beaches.

West Australian, 7/5/09, p1

Treatment: Earlier clue to cancer

Cancer patients may no longer need to endure months of unpleasing chemotherapy before learning if the toxic drugs are working.

A new method tested in the US combines PET scans and CAT scans and allows doctors to detect whether there is a 35% drop in a tumour activity within the first seven days of treatment.

The results, published in the journal *Clinical Cancer Research* this week, showed that of 50 sufferers tested only 22 seemed to respond to chemotherapy drugs. Previously, it could take up to three months to learn if the treatment was working.

Daily Telegraph, 7/5/09, p23

Treatment: Better survival with more therapy

Longer hormone therapy may improve results for men with locally advanced prostate cancer. Such men are often put on androgen suppression for two to three years but a new study, in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, has shown five years may be beneficial.

The study, which involved 189 men, found those on androgen suppression had 100% overall disease-free survival at five years, compared with 79% in those receiving the same therapy for a year or less.

The rate for men who had the therapy for one to five years was about 67%.

Australian Financial Review, 7/5/09, p58

Public health: Row with Canberra over new cancer centre

The Brumby Government has refused to take the lead with a new world-class cancer centre, as it wrangles with Canberra over who should pay for it.

The proposed \$1 billion Parkville cancer hospital would revolutionise treatment and research for Victorians, but was a notable omission from yesterday's Budget.

It is believed the State Government is waiting for the Federal Government to take the lead and say how much it will pledge to the project before revealing its own plans.

Yesterday Health Minister Daniel Andrews would promise only to honour the Government's Box Hill hospital commitment and would not comment on a new Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.

Herald Sun, 6/5/09, p9

Detection: Bowel symptoms are poorly predictive of colorectal cancer

Diagnosis of colorectal cancer is made more difficult by the large number of patients presenting with symptoms defined as low risk, new research shows.

A UK study found only 27% of patients presented with high-risk symptoms of rectal bleeding or change in bowel habits, while 73% had symptoms with low positive predictive values such as constipation, diarrhoea, weight loss or abdominal pain.

The findings also raised questions about relying on faecal occult blood tests to detect cases, with the authors saying more patients became symptomatic after screening age, the test had low sensitivity, and many patients declined screening.

The authors said the most common, but low predictive value, presentations often occurred in association with more benign, common conditions, complicating diagnosis.

The study is published in *BMC Medicine*.

Medical Observer, 1/5/09, p6

Obesity: Radical fat surgery plan

Thousands more severely overweight Australians would obtain access to lap-band surgery as part of a radical plan to curb obesity.

In a major federal policy rethink, those who are medically classified as morbidly obese would immediately qualify for surgery, rather than continue to try to lose weight via diet and exercise.

A parliamentary inquiry is expected to report in the next week on the need for making bariatric surgery widely available for those who are deemed to be unable to lose weight.

Adelaide Advertiser, 5/5/09, p5

Public health: New cancer clinic one step closer

Victoria's health system will get a \$2.6 billion cash jab in today's state Budget, bringing a new cancer centre in Melbourne a step closer.

Health spending will rise by \$1 billion on last year, the focus being on cutting waiting lists and retaining doctors and nurses in the state's understaffed hospitals.

The new \$1 billion cancer hospital is expected to be jointly funded by Federal and State Governments. The centre will bring together the country's top cancer experts under the banner of a relocated and modernised Peter MacCallum hospital.

There will also be a \$45 million budget increase in funding over four years for cancer treatment including the upgrading of breast cancer screening technology.

Herald Sun, 5/5/09, p2

Tobacco: Smoke 'cash cow' (international)

Of South-East Asia's 125 million cigarette smokers about 46% are in Indonesia, which has no legislation banning cigarette advertisements, the South-East Asia Tobacco Control Alliance said last night.

The anti-smoking group said Indonesia had become a "cash cow" for Phillip Morris International, the owner of Indonesia's PT HM Sampoerna Company, which last year claimed estimated revenue of \$US 1 billion ((A1.36 billion).

About 63% of Indonesian men smoke, with an estimated 200,000 dying each year of smoking-related diseases, the group claimed.

Age, 5/5/09, p9

Detection: Donation brings MRI machine to ACT

A donation of almost \$150,000 by a Canberra real estate agency will give young women at high risk of developing breast cancer access to magnetic resonance imaging screening previously unavailable in the ACT.

Radiologist Jeremy Price said the territory's first MRI equipment was 2[] times more effective at finding tumours in young women at high risk of breast cancer than other tests such as mammograms and ultrasounds.

Canberra Times, 2/5/09, p7

Obesity: Shock health ads hit mark

They are the TV advertisements that have scared 140,000 Australians into making lifestyle changes. Since October when the *Measure Up* campaign was launched, a third of the 328,259 visitors to the website have been motivated to download diet and exercise planners. At the same time, a free phone service offering personal coaching is taking up to 40 calls a day. Calls to the Get Healthy advice line have increased 300% in the past month with the help of the ads.

Running for 2 years, health officials hope to help 15,000 overweight NSW residents.

Daily Telegraph, 4/5/09, p12

Tobacco: Women at greater risk

Women are more likely than men to get lung cancer from smoking, researchers say. A study of 683 lung cancer patients between 2000-05 found that women developed tumours at a younger age than men, despite having smoked on average significantly less.

But other research presented at an international conference suggested women recovered better than men after surgery to remove lung tumours.

Sunday Times, 3/5/09, p4

Tobacco: Smokers banned at hospital

ACT Health Minister Katy Gallagher imagines the smoking ban in the Canberra Hospital grounds will not be without "hiccups" but says it was the right thing to do. Canberra Hospital became smoke-free yesterday, with signs explaining no-go areas and security guards directing patients, visitors and staff to designated smoking areas.

Canberra Times, 2/5/09, p6

Treatment: Cancer patients to get \$600m budget boost

People with bowel, breast or kidney cancer will benefit from a \$600 million funding increase in next week's federal budget under a plan to improve access to subsidised medicines.

The increase, to be spread over four years, will be used to subsidise three drugs aimed at increasing the lifespan and quality of life of people with cancer.

The new cancer funds mean that from July 1, Avastin, used for the treatment of bowel cancer, will be subsidised under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and cost \$310.7 million over

the next four years. The Government estimates about 1710 more people will use Avastin in the first year.

The subsidy will not be available for people currently taking it. For this group, the drug company Roche will pay the cost.

The budget will also provide \$166 million over four years so that the 1000 women who use Herceptin, used to treat aggressive and fast-growing late-stage breast cancer, will continue to get a special subsidy, which began in December 2001 but was due to end.

The budget will also provide \$131 million so that more than 600 people with renal cell carcinoma, accounting for 70% of all kidney cancer cases, will be able to get Sutent through the PBS for all prescriptions bought since last Friday.

Sunday Age, 3/5/09, p7; Sun Herald, 3/5/09, p1; Sunday Mail Adelaide, 3/5/09, p13; Daily Telegraph, 4/5/09, p12; Canberra Times, 4/5/09, p4; West Australian, 4/5/09, p6; Adelaide Advertiser, 4/5/09, p54; Sunday Times, 3/5/09, p32

Treatment: 'Dangers' in second-hand cancer drugs

Pharmacists are threatening not to stock a newly subsidised cancer drug because the Rudd Government wants them to sell unused leftovers.

The Government wants pharmacists to dispense part-used vials of cancer drugs to save \$150 million in wastage.

The Community Pharmacy Chemotherapy Services Group said the practice was dangerous and pharmacists would have to foot the bill for the unused portion.

"Avastin, like many other chemotherapy drugs, is tailored to a person's fluctuating weight and is highly volatile and unstable," the group said. "It is potentially dangerous to keep or re-use the surplus amounts at a later time."

The Government has delayed the new rules until September but is committed to the change.

Cancer Voices' John Stubbs welcomed the listing of the \$310 million drug. But he said patients might end up footing the bill for any left-overs not subsidised by the Government.

Adelaide Advertiser, 4/5/09, p5; Hobart Mercury, 4/5/09, p5; Herald Sun, 4/5/09, p18

Treatment: Hope on leukemia

A Victorian biotech company has developed a new drug for chronic myeloid leukemia – a discovery that offers hope of a cure for the blood cancer.

ChemGenex Pharmaceuticals chief executive Dr Greg Collier said the drug, omacetaxine, offered significant potential because it killed the stem cells that caused CML.

Dr Collier said 80% of patients on the clinical trials conducted in Australia, the US and Europe, no longer had cancer in the blood and one in five no longer had cancer in the bone marrow.

International clinical trials confirm omacetaxine significantly increases the survival rates of patients.

The drug may be available within months. ChemGenex said the drug was in final clinical trials and the company was hopeful of approval by the US regulators the Food and Drug Administration early next year.

Professor Tony Schwarzer at The Alfred is about to start two new clinical trials as part of the global development plan of the drug, which he said fulfilled a niche market for CML patients not responding to other drugs.

Sunday Herald Sun, 3/5/09, p24; Sunday Tasmanian, 3/5/09, p2; Sunday Times, 3/5/09, p31; Sunday Telegraph, 3/5/09, p31

Treatment: Daily pomegranate juice battles prostate peril

Cancer-fighting properties of pomegranate juice has been backed by another study in the US. Researchers monitored 48 men who had had treatment for their prostate cancer over six years.

Those who drank a cup of pomegranate juice daily performed better on their PSA tests, which can be an indicator of their ongoing cancer.

"The study suggests that pomegranate juice may effectively slow the progression of prostate cancer after unsuccessful treatment," Christopher Amling, of the American Urological Association, said.

Sunday Times, 3/5/09, p27; Herald Sun, 2/5/09, p18

Obesity: Children at centre of junk food fight

The battle of the bulge turned into a skirmish of statistics yesterday as health groups and advertisers traded blows over the level of junk food TV ads aimed at children, confirming the issue is back on the political agenda.

The level of junk food ads in programs watched by children has not dropped as advertisers insist, says a confederation of 15 health groups, the Coalition on Food Advertising to Children.

Its report comes as publication of new children's television standards has been delayed. The coalition's latest study found that children watching two hours of commercial television a day are exposed to 2200 ads a year for burgers, chips, chocolates and soft drinks.

The coalition launched a campaign yesterday to enlist consumers to email health ministers. It wants a ban on all TV junk food ads before 9pm.

The coalition's chairwoman, Kathy Chapman, acknowledged the volume of food ads had fallen but said the proportion of junk food ads remained at two-thirds. "The proportion of unhealthy food advertising compared to healthy [ads] is much higher in times when there are more children watching than when there's a predominantly adult audience," she said.

Advertisers hit back, saying the number of junk food ads "seen by children" had fallen 35% in two years to September 2008. The chief executive of the Australian Association of National Advertisers, Scott McClellan, said "It's been trending down and there's no evidence to show that's changed."

Sydney Morning Herald, 1/5/09, p3; Age, 1/5/09, p5

Prevention: Caution on ovarian removal

Removing the ovaries at hysterectomy confers no survival benefit for women without cancer and may increase their risk of heart disease and lung cancer, data from the Nurses' Health Study suggest. Of nearly 30,000 study participants who had a hysterectomy for benign disease more than half also had a bilateral oophorectomy.

During 24 years of follow-up, researchers found that while women who had a bilateral oophorectomy were less likely to develop breast or ovarian cancer, compared with women who retained their ovaries, the risk of all-cause mortality, fatal and nonfatal coronary heart disease and lung cancer increased.

"At no age was oophorectomy associated with a survival benefit. Preventive surgery should not be performed if it does not clearly benefit the patient," the study authors concluded.

"Therefore, prophylactic oophorectomy, with the goal of improving survival by reducing ovarian cancer, seems not to be supported by our study."

The study is published in *Obstetrics and Gynecology*.

Australian Doctor, 1/5/09, p11

Prevention: Wine fights cancer

Evidence that moderate alcohol consumption protects against cancer continues to grow. In the latest report, US researchers show that people who drank wine were at lower risk of death or relapse if they later developed non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

They analysed data from about 550 women with the malignancy, and found that those who drank wine had a 76% five-year survival rate compared with 68% for non-wine drinkers.

Beer or spirit consumption did not show a benefit.

The research was presented at the American Association for Cancer Research Annual Meeting.

Australian Doctor, 1/5/09, p15

Skin: Melanoma checks

New study results serve as a reminder that checking male patients for melanoma could save their lives. US researchers surveyed 227 men over the age of 40 who had been diagnosed with melanoma, and found that more than 95% of cancers on the back of the body spotted by a doctor (not necessarily a dermatologist) were less than 2mm thick, compared with 63% of self-detected melanomas and 76% of partner-detected lesions.

Unsurprisingly, back lesions comprised almost half of all physician-detected melanomas, compared to just 16% of self-detected lesions.

The study is published in *Archives of Dermatology*.

Australian Doctor, 1/5/09, p15

Skin: It's hats off to the sunny D-day doses (TAS)

It's time to throw away the hat and start soaking in the sunshine, the Cancer Council says. From today through to August 31, people are encouraged to consider their vitamin D levels. Tasmanians have a high risk of vitamin D deficiency, with 67% of women and 34% of men suffering insufficient levels, a Menzies Research Institute study found. Cancer Council Tasmania's director of cancer control Celia Taylor said, "The sun is both the enemy and friend and it's a friend between May 1 and August 31 because it gives us the vitamin D we desperately need for bones, muscles and health in general."
Hobart Mercury, 1/5/09, p5

Treatment: Fear drives breast cancer surgery

Australian experts have expressed concern over the number of women with breast cancer having potentially unnecessary contralateral prophylactic mastectomies (CPM). Their comments come as a US study of 51,030 women with unilateral ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) showed CPM rates rose by 148% from 1998 to 2005. Women younger than 40, recently diagnosed with breast cancer, with lobular carcinoma in situ, a large tumour size or a high tumour grade, were more likely to undergo CPM, they found.

Dr Andrew Spillane, associate professor of surgical oncology at Sydney University, said anecdotal evidence suggested CPM rates were rising in Australia at a similar level to that found in the US study among the same demographic.

"I spend a lot of time talking women out of CPM...because I think a lot of women believe that they are at a very high risk of getting cancer on the other side...and the risk is actually quite low [around 0.7%]."

He attributed the trend to an increased use of MRIs, improved availability and quality of reconstruction surgery and increased availability of genetic testing for breast cancer.

Dr Helen Zorbas, CEO of the National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre, agreed. "In the vast majority of cases, bilateral mastectomy would not be something that would be recommended as a treatment option." However, she said CPM could be viable for women identified as mutation carriers or with a family history of breast cancer.

Medical Observer, 1/5/09, p8

Treatment: Hormone therapy in men linked to CVD

Men who undergo hormone therapy for prostate cancer significantly increase their risk of fracture and cardiovascular disease, a review suggests.

Together with a 23% increased risk of fracture and a 17% increased risk of CVD, two large studies included in the review found that androgen deprivation therapy was associated with significant elevations in diabetes risk.

By clarifying the risks of hormone therapy, Associate Professor Phillip Stricker, chairman of the department of urology at Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital, said the review may encourage clinicians to "work harder at the balancing act" of treating patients with the disease.

The review is published in *Cancer* online.

Australian Doctor, 1/5/09, p7

Treatment: New drugs go on the PBS

Drugs to treat kidney cancer and osteoporosis go on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme today, saving sufferers thousands of dollars a year.

The Government will today put Sunitinib – used to treat renal cell carcinoma, a form of kidney cancer – onto the PBS, benefiting 644 sufferers.

Daily Telegraph, 1/5/09, p19

Cancer in the News is produced by Cancer Council Australia and is an edited summary of news items in daily national and capital city newspapers. It is aimed at keeping Cancer Council staff and stakeholders up-to-date on issues relating to cancer and does not necessarily represent the views of Cancer Council Australia.