

CANCER IN THE NEWS NOVEMBER 2008

Tobacco: Councils will not police smokes ban (WA)

Further doubt was cast over Alfred Cove MP Janet Woollard's proposed smoking bans when the WA Local Government Association joined Police Commissioner Karl O'Callaghan yesterday in criticising the legislation and said councils would not actively enforce such a move.

Dr Woollard's Bill would outlaw smoking in cars while children are in them, at playgrounds and between the safety flags on beaches and ban tobacco displays in shops. The playground, beach and display bans would need to be enforced by local councils. But WALGA president Bill Mitchell said councils did not have the resources to police the changes actively. If the legislation was passed, the State would need to pay for councils to enforce it.

West Australian, 28/11/08, p17

Treatment: WA scientists in lung illness 'cure'

Perth scientists have made a major breakthrough in their bid to find a cure for the deadly lung disease mesothelioma, after discovering that a commercial skin cancer cream, was able to cure mice with advanced mesothelioma tumours.

Researchers from the National Centre for Asbestos Related Diseases at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital say the startling results in mice offer fresh hope to the thousands of home handymen still likely to contract the disease because of their exposure to asbestos many years ago.

The Perth doctors injected the skin cancer cream Aldara, which is normally applied to skin to treat basal cell carcinomas, along with a stimulant drug known as anti-CD40 directly into the tumours in mice with mesothelioma.

They found it caused their immune systems to produce killer cells which hunted out and destroyed cancer cells.

Researchers Steve Broomfield and Andrew Currie said half of the mice with advanced mesothelioma that were treated with the drug were completely cured, which was considered a phenomenal result.

West Australian, 28/11/08, p11

Public health: Cancer numbers falling (international)

The rate at which new cancers are diagnosed and the death rate from the disease have both decreased in the United States for the first time in 10 years, according to a new report.

"For the first time since the report was first issued in 1998, both incidence and death rates for all cancers combined are decreasing for both men and women, driven largely by declines in some of the most common types of cancer," said the Annual Report to the Nation on the Status of Cancer, which tracks trends in the illness from 1975-2005.

The rate at which new cancers were diagnosed fell by 0.8% per year from 1999-2005 for both men and women, while the death rate from cancer declined 1.8% from 2002 to 2005.

The continuing fall in mortality from cancer reflected "gains in prevention, early detection and treatment," said Otis Brawley, chief medical officer of the American Cancer Society (ACS).

Northern Territory News, 27/11/08, p19; Age, 27/11/08, p15

Tobacco: More want to stub out smoking in public places

Tolerance of smoking in public places is waning, with research showing most Australians want the habit banned from outdoor dining and children's playgrounds.

And a small majority go as far as to support a blanket ban on cigarettes altogether in the next decade.

University of Newcastle researchers say the findings are proof there is a "rising tide for change" in smoking legislation, even among smokers themselves.

Lead researcher Associate Professor Raoul Walsh said, "Governments have acted but this shows people want them to go further and make it even more difficult to smoke."

37% of smokers and 60% of non-smokers supported complete tobacco prohibition within 10 years. The public also appeared to want tougher restrictions on cigarette sales, with strong backing for bans in tobacco sales in supermarkets and other stores visited by children.

The research is published in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*.

Canberra Times, 27/11/08, p7; Daily Telegraph, 27/11/08, p21; Hobart Mercury, 27/11/08, p3

Tobacco: Police chief snubs smokes Bill (WA)

Legislation which is set to ban smoking in cars when children are passengers has drawn a defiant response from Police Commissioner Karl O'Callaghan, who said yesterday his officers had more important things to do than enforce a health issue and he would not order police to enforce the new laws.

Mr O'Callaghan said he might not even issue infringement books to officers to cover the offence of smoking in cars with children.

"This new issue is a health issue, it's not a policing issue," he said.

West Australian, 27/11/08, p7

Treatment: Modbury Hospital cancer referral

Cancer patients will have to go to the Royal Adelaide Hospital to get a referral to Modbury Hospital for treatment. The State Government stated yesterday the two part-time medical oncologists would be leaving Modbury, to be replaced by a chemotherapy nurse.

Adelaide Hospital, 27/11/08, p2

Treatment: Cervical cancer hope

Cervical cancer in mice has been stopped in its tracks by a protein discovered by a Monash University team, fuelling hopes of a wide-ranging new cancer treatment.

In just one week, the researchers were able to halve the size of tumours by injecting a protein that disrupts cancerous cells' growth.

The protein, bone morphogenetic protein-7 (BMP-7), works by blocking an enzyme involved in the lifespan of 85% of all cancers.

Lead researcher Associate Professor Jun-Ping Liu said though it was not yet known exactly how the protein blocked the growth enzyme, telomerase, from working, the results in almost 100 mice were extremely promising.

"It was 100% successful in mice, with every single mouse seeing some tumour reduction," he said.

Herald Sun, 27/11/08, p30

Detection: Health gig for our first bloke

When it comes to health checks, most blokes shudder at the prospect of a prostate check-up. So says Australia's acting first bloke, businessman and hairdresser Tim Mathieson, partner of acting Prime Minister Julia Gillard and one of the Government's newly appointed men's health ambassadors.

Mr Mathieson said every man over 50 should be checked for prostate cancer. The health ambassadors will roam the nation promoting men's health as part of the process of developing a national men's health policy, launched yesterday by Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon.

Hobart Mercury, 26/11/08, p2; Age, 26/11/08, p1

Detection: NT cancer deaths down

Death rates from cervical cancer have "plummeted" among Territory women, a report released by the Health Department yesterday shows.

In the 15 years leading to 2005, mortality fell by 64% among non-indigenous women and 92 among Aboriginal women.

The Health Department's Steve Guthridge said that the plunge in death rate showed that many Territory women were being screened and being given follow-up treatment of abnormalities.

"In the past, access by Indigenous women to screening programs has lagged behind non-Indigenous women, but improved services and better awareness of cervical cancer has resulted in greater participation in screening programs and a positive plummet in both cervical incidence and mortality rates."

Northern Territory News, 26/11/08, p11

Public health: Spotlight on health

The states will be rated on the prevalence of obesity, smoking and alcohol abuse under a new health-funding deal.

State funding will be linked to health outcomes and hospital standards under the new

Australian healthcare agreement, to be struck on Saturday.

The accountability measures will include state-wide measures of community health, such as obesity and sexually transmitted diseases. Others will highlight problems in individual hospitals.

Herald Sun, 26/11/08, p23

Treatment: Hospital clear of bungle cover-up

Public hospital administrators in Adelaide have been cleared of covering up a treatment bungle that caused hundreds of cancer patients to be wrongly dosed with radiation.

The review by former South Australian premier's department chief Ian Kowalick investigated why Royal Adelaide Hospital failed for nearly two years to notify the state Government of the 869 patients who were under-dosed.

Mr Kowalick found yesterday there was "no basis for the notion there was any attempt to cover up" the error, even though it was discovered in 2006 but was not reported to the Government until July 16 this year.

The investigation into the response of the hospital management found a decision had been made that the under-dosing was not "clinically significant".

In the circumstances, the failure to immediately report the episode to the Government, hospital insurers and affected patients was reasonable, given the information available.

"The Kowalick review recommends existing policies on reporting matters of significance be reviewed, and that policies and training in managing open disclosure may need to be improved," SA Health chief executive Tony Sherbon said.

A separate review also released yesterday, of a suspected cancer cluster at Adelaide's Women's and Children's Hospital found no obvious reason why twice the expected number of staff in one building were diagnosed with breast cancer.

The report by David Roder, head of research and information science at the state's Cancer Council, concluded it was unlikely any environmental factor could have caused the unusual cancer pattern, in which breast cancer rates grew while cases of other cancers dropped.

Australian, 26/11/08, p8

Skin: Disturbed GP puts patients at risk

A major NSW Health Department investigation has found thousands of skin cancer patients treated by a mentally ill Sydney doctor are at risk due to his inadequate care.

The acting Chief Health Officer of NSW Health, Kerry Chant, yesterday announced the investigation had led the department to write to 6770 people urging them to seek medical attention.

David Lindsay operated his sole bulk-billing practice, Skin Cancer Clinic Sydney in George Street from 1998 to last December, until he was suspended after at least 60 complaints dating back to 1993.

The NSW Medical Tribunal found him guilty of professional misconduct in August and deregistered him for at least three years. He was prosecuted over 26 complaints which had escalated at an "alarming rate" since 2005.

Dr Chant said the department was concerned for the welfare of at least 1310 patients with serious skin cancers because it was not clear whether they received any follow-up appointments and some had not been properly treated.

Sydney Morning Herald, 25/11/08, p1

Tobacco: Cig seller in court

Coles Express breached cigarette advertising laws by having staff offer discounts to customers who bought more than one pack, a court heard yesterday.

The Department of Health launched a Supreme Court action against the chain after its inspectors reported the practice – known as "upselling" – at 26 outlets across NSW.

The Department said undercover inspectors had ordered single packs of cigarettes from Coles Express stores in July last year. In each case, a sales assistant had told them they could receive a discount if they bought two packs.

Bruce Hodgkinson, appearing for the Department of Health, said this amounted to a cigarette advertisement, which is illegal.

Coles admits aspects of the breach but is challenging technicalities.

Daily Telegraph, 25/11/08, p11

Treatment: Some breast cancers do not need treating: study

Doctors have called for a major review of how breast cancer is managed after a Norwegian study found that some cancers picked up by mammography seemed to disappear without being treated.

The findings, published in the journal *Archives of Internal Medicine* this week, suggest that as many as 20% of breast cancers picked up by X-ray are being treated unnecessarily because the tumours would have disappeared on their own due to spontaneous regression.

But Australian breast screening experts were sceptical of the findings yesterday and said they should not deter women from having checks.

Researchers from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health looked at breast cancer rates in almost 120,000 women aged 50 to 64 who had regular mammograms and compared them with a similar number of women not offered the program.

West Australian, 25/11/08, p5

Treatment: Painless zap gives hope in battle against cancer

A revolutionary painless technique that uses electrical pulses to zap tumours is being tested at The Alfred hospital in Melbourne.

Radiologists say irreversible electroporation – known as IRE – has potential as an alternative to surgery or radiotherapy.

The technique involves using a device called an IRE-Nanoknife to place fine needle electrodes with precision in or around the tumour, which is then targeted with intense electric pulses lasting less than a minute each.

The Alfred's professor of radiology, Ken Thomson, said the technique could replace chemotherapy in the future. "We're on the way to proving the safety of it. But we haven't really got a technique that we can say guarantees this would be as good as surgery. We're some months or years away from that point."

Canberra Times, 25/11/08, p5; Age, 25/11/08, p3; Hobart Mercury, 25/11/08, p3; Adelaide Advertiser, 25/11/08, p22

Treatment: Common cold may be a cure for cancer

Australian listed biotechnology company Viralytics is trying to use a cold to cure cancer. Chief executive Bryan Delahunty said the idea of its lead-compound Catavak was for the virus to enter and infect cancer cells. Then, using the natural reproductive cycle of the virus, thousands of new virus copies would be released to attack further cancer cells in different parts of the body.

Developed at Newcastle University, the approach uses a conventional and widely-studied benign common cold virus called Coxsackievirus21 which has an ideal receptor that acts like a key for opening cancer cells. It seems to be particularly good at bonding with solid tumour cells in cancers including melanoma and cancers of the breast, prostate, brain, head and neck.

Clinical trials in human subjects are at an early stage.

Herald Sun, 25/11/08, p31

Public health: Taskforce tainted, say health groups

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's taskforce on obesity, binge drinking and smoking has been criticised by leading public health experts who say a senior member represents the junk food industry.

Obesity experts want Kate Carnell, head of the Australian Food and Grocery Council, to step down from Mr Rudd's preventive health taskforce, accusing her of a major conflict of interest. The former ACT chief minister was appointed to the taskforce in April, when she was head of the Australian General Practice Network. But she quit the post a month later to work for the food industry body, which has strongly opposed bans on junk food advertising.

Body Swinburn, one of Australia's most prominent obesity experts and a member of the Obesity Policy Coalition, said Ms Carnell's presence on the taskforce threatened its credibility. Rosanna Capolingua, president of the Australian Medical Association, agreed and said her position merited a "high level of scrutiny".

Professor Swinburn said it would be a "disaster for public health" if the commercial interests of Ms Carnell's employer influenced policies on how to make the Australian diet healthier.

Health Minister Nicola Roxon has defended Ms Carnell's position, saying she was appointed for her public health expertise.

Chairman of the taskforce Professor Rob Moodie said it was canvassing a wide range of views and Ms Carnell could have a positive influence. "In the long run we have to make sure that the food and beverage industry produces healthy products so that obesity is no longer a commercial success but healthy weight and responsible drinking are commercial successes and we want Kate to assist us to do that," he said.

Sunday Age, 23/11/08, p16

Risk: hospital staff cancer rates to be studied

The Health Department is investigating claims of an unusually high number of cancer cases among staff at Busselton Hospital campus in the past two years.

Unnamed staff sources claim 15 long-term workers have been diagnosed with cancer in that time. Health authorities would not speculate on the number yesterday but said they were taking the concerns seriously.

"Every measure is being taken to investigate the situation," regional director for WA Country Health Service South-West Ian Smith said. "Staff will be offered an opportunity to discuss the findings with the Public Health Division and management in the coming weeks."

The department's director of public health intelligence, Jim Codde, said the department had compared cancer cases in the past 10 years at the campus, which employs 280 staff, with State and local rates.

"Given the diverse types of cancers that have developed in the last decade or so, the different occupational roles and the large variation in the period of employment at the hospital by staff that have developed cancer, it seems unlikely that working in the hospital is the cause of their illness," he said. "However, further more rigorous analysis of the information in the WA Cancer Registry will be undertaken."

Cancer Council Australia's occupational and environmental cancer committee chairman Terry Slevin said he expected more reports of suspected cancer clusters in workplaces because of the ageing workforce in which people had tended to work with one employer for many years. Though in most cases workplaces themselves were unlikely to contribute to cancer rates, concerns had to be investigated.

West Australian, 22/11/08, p12

Skin: now-or-never warning to teens on sunburn

Slip Slop Slap didn't work. Neither did the "killer body art" television campaign warning teenagers against sun exposure. The Cancer Council Tasmania faces a now-or-never battle to "sex up" the skin cancer message for teenagers, says health promotion coordinator Kay Gunn.

"They are the hardest demographic to get through to," she says. "Without a sexy and exciting campaign and role models or celebrities to finally get through to them, they just aren't hearing it."

One in four Tasmania teenagers gets sunburnt every summer weekend, the council says. The teens spend an average of two hours in the sun during peak UV times and almost one-third who got burnt said they forgot to reapply sunscreen.

Sunday Tasmanian, 23/11/08, p9

Treatment: fights cancer, this one does

Scientists have developed a *Star Wars*-style "light sabre" that could fight cancer cells. The device could be routinely used on patients within the next five years, according to the researchers.

The machine - a couple of millimetres square - fires a laser beam so accurately that it can puncture a hole in an individual cell, allowing drugs to enter and do their work much more effectively.

It could mean, for example, that the cells surrounding the spot where a tumour has been removed by surgery would be holed by the device. This would allow chemotherapy drugs to enter and kill any remaining cancer cells. It would be particularly useful for hard-to-reach cancers such as that of the pancreas.

The team from the University of St Andrews in Scotland has managed to mount the "light sabre" on an optical fibre. The next step is to develop it for use on endoscopes, the tubes used by surgeons to pass miniature cameras through the body.

Sunday Mail Brisbane, 23/11/08, p26

Detection: experts denounce gene patents

Cancer researchers, including the inventor of the cervical cancer vaccine, Professor Ian Frazer, have stepped up calls for a revision of patent laws that allow private firms to claim ownership of human genes, as concern mounts that the laws could hinder the development of new treatments.

Their calls come amid growing debate about the legitimacy of awarding patents to those who isolate portions of human DNA relevant to a range of diseases.

"A patent holder can determine whether or where your genes are tested," Graeme Suthers, the head of the familial cancer unit at the South Australian Clinical Genetics Service, told the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia's annual scientific meeting in Sydney yesterday.

He said it was unlikely the legitimacy of gene patents would be challenged in Australia because anyone bringing such a case could not gain financially from it, merely depriving the patent holder of potential gains. He said such a case would cost at least \$3 million.

Terry Moore, manager of the Office of the Director General of the Federal Government's intellectual property organisation IP Australia, said patent law developed before the explosion of biological discoveries and might not be suited to cope with them. But she defended the concept of patenting human DNA.

Ms Moore said more research was required into how well the patent system was working to promote and reward innovation, and whether it was meeting its remit of fostering public benefit while giving an appropriate incentive to people who came up with new discoveries.

Their comments come after the announcement of a Senate inquiry into gene patenting, initiated by the NSW Senator Bill Heffernan, and a backdown this week by the Melbourne company Genetic Technologies, whose former chief executive and major shareholder, Mervyn Jacobson, said he would not pursue an earlier demand that public hospitals send all samples from breast cancer patients suspected of having mutations in the genes BRCA1 and BRCA2 to the company's laboratory for testing.

Sydney Morning Herald, 21/11/08, p5; Age, 21/11/08, p4; Adelaide Advertiser, 21/11/08, p6

Research: nice one

Broccoli lowers the risk of lung cancer in smokers and ex-smokers, a new US study has claimed.

Li Tang of the Roswell Park Cancer Institute said cruciferous vegetables didn't eliminate the threat of cancer, but they helped. "Broccoli is not a therapeutic drug, but for smokers who believe they cannot quit nor do anything about their risk, this is something positive," she said. "People who quit smoking will definitely benefit more from the intake of cruciferous vegetables."

Other common cruciferous vegies include cabbage, brussels sprouts, cauliflower and bok choy.

MX Melbourne, 20/11/08, p11

Risk: work cancer risk warning

Waiters, bar staff and tobacco workers may be working themselves to death. A large international study of occupations and cancer, presented in Australia this week, has found waiters have the highest chance of developing cancer: they are at a 50% higher risk than average.

Men who work in the beverage or tobacco industries, as well as chimney sweeps, are also much more likely to suffer from cancer.

For women, the top cancer causing industries are tobacco, military and transport, according to a study of 15 million people presented at the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia's annual scientific meeting in Sydney. Farmers, gardeners and forestry workers have the lowest chance of developing cancer.

Dr Elisabeth Weiderpass, from the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, said occupations had a huge impact on people's lifestyles, which caused large differences in cancer rates among the 53 occupation groups studied.

Though there may have been some variation in the exposure to cancer-causing substances, such as tobacco and alcohol, between occupations in different countries, Dr Weiderpass said the results were a valuable guide for future occupational health and cancer prevention programs.

Herald Sun, 21/11/08, p22

Obesity: ad ban opponents fire up

Food and drink producers and advertisers claim there is no evidence that banning junk food ads will help stop childhood obesity.

A Senate inquiry into a Bill proposed by Greens' leader Bob Brown, seeking to ban food and drink advertising during programs aimed at children, yesterday heard denials of any link between ads and childhood obesity.

Sweden, Norway and Quebec, in Canada, have banned advertising targeted at children.

Opponents of a ban say there is no substantial difference in obesity rates in those countries.

In a feisty exchange with Senator Brown, Julie Flynn, from Free TV Australia - which represents free-to-air television stations - said that banning ads on free-to-air TV would simply mean more on pay TV and the internet.

But the committee also heard from health and parent groups, which said Senator Brown's Bill did not go far enough. Clare Hughes from consumer advocacy group Choice, said restrictions on advertising around P and G-rated shows assumed that children only watched programs made for them.

Age, 20/11/08, p12; Adelaide Advertiser, 20/11/08, p34

Prevention: Gardasil for boys in Canberra's hands

Ian Frazer's cervical cancer vaccine is effective in preventing pre-cancerous genital lesions and warts in about 90% of young men, an international study has found.

The research has renewed debate on whether Australia's immunisation program should be expanded to include free Gardasil vaccinations for boys.

"Now that we have data that shows the vaccine is effective in boys, the Federal Government might wish to seek expert advice as to whether a case can be made for vaccinating boys at government expense," Dr Frazer said.

He said whether the Government decided to give young men Gardasil through its free vaccination program would come down to whether it was found to be cost effective.

Dr Frazer, head of the University of Queensland's Diamantina Institute, presented the results of the study to the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia's annual scientific meeting in Sydney.

Courier Mail, 20/11/08, p66

Screening: company relents on breast cancer gene test

The company that intended to block hospitals from testing for a genetic predisposition for breast cancer is likely to abandon its plan following a public outcry.

Melbourne company Genetic Technologies holds the Australia patent for a test for BRCA1 and BRCA2, genes that increase the chances of breast cancer in women.

For the past six years the company has allowed competing laboratories to perform the test, but this year it announced it would block others from testing the samples obtained from patients. But at a fiery annual general meeting yesterday, shareholders in the company voted out most of the board of directors and left the board with a team of three led by the company's founder, Mervyn Jacobson.

Regarding the controversial decision to enforce the BRCA test rights, Dr Jacobson told the meeting: "To the extent that I'm able to, I will reverse that."

Age, 20/11/08, p5

Screening: plan for prostate cancer test

All Australian men could be blood tested for prostate cancer at 40 under a proposal to be put to the Federal Government.

As Australia's first dedicated prostate cancer research centre opened at Richmond's Epworth Hospital yesterday, leading urologist Professor Tony Costello revealed one of its first aims was to introduce a national screening program for prostate specific antigen, or PSA.

The plan puts the new Prostate Cancer Research Centre immediately at odds with the Cancer Council which does not support PSA screening because it claims the test is unreliable and can cause panic by identifying slow-growing cancers which do not cause harm.

Speaking to an audience including Treasurer Wayne Swan at the opening of the \$7.5 million centre, Professor Costello said PSA screening was a "thorny issue". But he would push ahead with a proposal to see every Australian man have the blood test at 40. Blood tests revealing high levels of PSA can be an indication that there is something wrong with the prostate gland, including cancer, which can be further investigated.

But Cancer Council Victoria director David Hill said the test could not differentiate between aggressive and non-aggressive cancers, leading to unnecessary concern and operations risking side effects such as impotency and incontinence. "We do not have the scientific evidence to support a mass screening program for prostate cancer using PSA tests or any other tests," Mr Hill said.

Herald Sun, 20/11/08, p6; Age, 20/11/08, p9

Skin: edible sunscreen

A vitamin found in meat, nuts, grains and cereals may be more effective than sunscreen in preventing skin cancer, research has found.

Nicotinamide, or Vitamin B3, prevents damage from both UVA and UVB radiation by protecting the immune system and could be taken in tablet form or added to sunscreen, Associate Professor Diona Damian of the University of Sydney said yesterday.

Sunscreens provide protection against UVB rays, which cause sunburn and skin cancer, but are less effective against UVA, which also causes skin cancer.

"UV radiation in sunlight suppresses the skin's immune system and makes it more susceptible to skin cancer," she said. "Our research found that nicotinamide (Vitamin B3) can prevent the immuno-suppressive effects of UV by energising cells so they maintain their immunity."

Daily Telegraph, 20/11/08, p26; Adelaide Advertiser, 20/11/08, p30; Sydney Morning Herald, 20/11/08, p21; MX Brisbane, 19/11/08, p8; Northern Territory News, 20/11/08, p36; Herald Sun, 20/11/08, p9; Canberra Times, 20/11/08, p6

Nutrition: food giant takes sugar hit to sweeten image

The world's largest food manufacturer has reduced sugar levels of some of its top selling kids' foods - such as Milo cereal and chocolate milk - and will stop advertising non-nutritious products under a plan to improve its image worldwide.

Nestle will unveil the global marketing initiative in Switzerland later today in response to growing concerns about the role of food manufacturers and their marketing practices in rising obesity rates.

The new "global marketing to children principles" will be underpinned by a nutritional profile system that will define which foods will be allowed to be marketed and which will need to be reformulated to meet marketing guidelines.

The global shift in marketing practices by the company has been largely driven by Nestle's Australian operations in response to rising community concerns about food marketing. The responsible marketing guidelines will be enforced in every market where Nestle operates by the end of the year, with marketing required to encourage active lifestyles, not undermine parental authority and for no advertising to be directed to children under six.

But children's advocacy groups have greeted Nestle's move with scepticism. Boyd Swinburn, a spokesman for the Parents Jury and professor of population health at Deakin University, said he feared the move had been driven by PR concerns. "I would call it a small baby step, but I think the health of children in Australia and the world warrant some bigger steps, such as a blanket ban on TV advertising of unhealthy food until 9.30 at night," Professor Swinburn said.

Kate Carnell, chief executive of the Australian Food and Grocery Council described Nestle's move as "a huge step". "I think it shows that industry is taking the issue of overweight children, obesity and nutrition very, very seriously and understands that it has to be part of the solution," she said.

Australian, 19/11/08, p1

Prevention: boys should be given 'Gardasil'

Boys should be given the cervical cancer vaccine Gardasil to help wipe out the cancer causing human papilloma virus, the vaccine's inventor says.

The vaccine's creator, Professor Ian Frazer, yesterday said trials had shown Gardasil was effective in treating boys. "There are three reasons to vaccinate boys. One is to prevent them getting the diseases caused by these viruses including warts and cancer," he said. "The second one is because boys, if they have this infection, can pass it on to girls. The third is if you vaccinate enough people in the community...you eventually reduce the number of people who are susceptible to the virus to the point where the virus starts to die out in the community because there aren't enough people who can be infected anymore."

The Federal Government pays for girls from age 12 to be vaccinated. The vaccine is approved but not free for boys.

Adelaide Advertiser, 19/11/08, p9

Research: research centre on way

Australia's first dedicated prostate cancer research centre will be operating before the end of the year at Epworth Hospital in Richmond.

Treasurer Wayne Swan will today confirm Labor's election promise of \$7.5 million to the private hospital to establish the centre for research, treatment and new diagnostic tests for the killer disease.

Labor took the promise of two such centres to the federal election last year, and in this year's budget confirmed the commitment. Epworth is the first announced.

Leading urologist and prostate cancer researcher Professor Tony Costello said the contract for the centre would be signed before the end of the week, and research would begin before the end of the year.

The second prostate cancer research centre is expected to be announced before the end of the year. It will be based outside Victoria.

Age, 19/11/08, p10

Treatment: cancer patients want the truth at all costs

Some cancer patients have learnt their oncologist did not tell them about a relevant drug because the treatment was too expensive, a study has revealed.

The finding reflects research showing up to 40% of oncologists would hesitate to inform a patient of a drug, which might cost up to \$1000 a week.

University of Sydney associate professor of medical oncology Fran Boyle said many oncologists felt it was kinder not to mention expensive drugs not subsidised on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Professor Boyle said some of these drugs might increase the chances of curing a patient or extend their survival.

"Oncologists are in a terrible dilemma," she said. "If they say to the patient, 'Here's an option for your treatment, but the cost is going to be exorbitant' - is that going to add so much to the distress of that patient, when they're already in a vulnerable position?"

Professor Boyle, an oncologist at Mater Hospital in Sydney, spoke to fellow oncologists at a Clinical Oncological Society meeting in Sydney yesterday. She said cancer patients wanted them to be more up front about available drug treatments. Several participants in the study had found out about a drug after being treated, which they thought would have been useful in their recovery. They described this as a real breach of trust, Professor Boyle said. "Almost all the women we surveyed, 96%, said they wanted to be informed about high-cost drugs, whether or not they could afford them," she said.

Breast Cancer Network Australia chief executive Lyn Swinburne said the research sent a clear message from women: they wanted to be told the whole story. "These results provide that knowing a treatment choice is far more important than any potential distress at not being able to afford the treatment," Ms Swinburne said.

The survey, involving almost 50 breast cancer patients across Australia, was conducted by University of Sydney medical student Emily Kaser with Breast Cancer Network Australia.

Canberra Times, 19/11/08, p3; Age, 19/11/08, p12

Treatment: cancer drug raises risk of blood clots

A much heralded cancer drug to treat bowel, breast, lung and kidney cancer significantly increases the risk of blood clots, a major US study has warned.

The study, published yesterday in the Journal of the American Medical Association, sold as Avastin, increased the risk of blood clots in deep leg or lung veins by a third.

The study found patients using Avastin had a 12% risk of developing deep vein thrombosis and a 6.3% higher risk of high-grade blood clots. The risk was 20% in bowel cancer patients, 15% in lung cancer patients and 7% in those with breast cancer.

A spokesman for the Therapeutic Goods Administration said a possible association between Avastin and blood clots had been known for some time and the Australia product information contained this information.

Patients were advised to see their doctor or go to a hospital emergency department if they developed any sign of deep vein thrombosis.

West Australian, 19/11/08, p18

Treatment: robot a cancer mix-fix

An Australian-first chemotherapy robot will provide an extra 10,000 doses of life saving drugs to Victorian cancer patients.

The state-of-the-art machine will take over mixing of highly toxic chemotherapy drugs at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, allowing one-third more treatments to be prepared and limiting staff exposure to dangerous chemicals.

The state's flagship cancer hospital administers 20,000 chemotherapy treatments a year; however, the Cytocare robot could provide up to 30,000 when it becomes fully operational early next year to meet an expected rise in demand in coming years.

Herald Sun, 19/11/08, p29

Treatment: stress therapies help beat cancer

Psychological counselling, muscle relaxation and other strategies for reducing stress in breast cancer patients can cut their risk of death from the disease by more than half, according to a study published in the online journal *Cancer*.

The study also found that psychological intervention reduced the risk that the tumours would return by 45%. Even when the tumours returned, patients who received the counselling had six more cancer-free months compared with those who did not.

The researchers, led by psychology professor Barbara Andersen of Ohio State University, focused on stress reduction as a primary reason patients appeared to benefit from the group counselling sessions. But other scientists said there was not enough evidence to support that idea.

"You have to be a little cautious in interpreting these results," Dr Smita Bhatia, director of the Centre for Cancer Survivorship at City of Hope in Duarte, California, said. "There is obviously some effect which is persisting long terms; it just needs to be teased out more, which part of the program is doing."

The notion that psychological treatment can prolong the lives of cancer patients "has been controversial for years", Michael Stefanek, director of the American Cancer Society's Behavioural Research Centre, said.

Two recent studies that focused on women with early-stage breast cancer found no survival advantage, and he cautioned patients against expecting counselling to prolong their lives.

In the latest study, psychologists taught patients a muscle-relaxation technique to reduce physical stress, strategies for combating the fatigue brought on by chemotherapy, and encouraged them to devote their energy to fun activities, Professor Andersen said.

She said it was not clear how the counselling helped patients but one theory was that stress activated hormones that taxed the immune system.

West Australian, 19/11/08, p47; MX Melbourne, 18/11/08, p13

Prevention: daily vitamins have no role in cancer prevention

Taking folic acid, vitamin B or B12 supplements has no effect on the incidence of cancer in women, new research shows, contradicting previous studies that had indicated they may be preventive.

A US randomised trial has found the widely used supplements, while not harmful, do not prevent incidence of total invasive cancer or breast cancer. Observational studies had indicated they may prevent colorectal cancer and breast cancer in particular.

Professor Ian Olver, CEO of Cancer Council Australia, said the results invalidated the use of folate supplements or multivitamins to prevent cancer. "This large study has shown that taking daily vitamins, if you are taking them because you thought it would help prevent cancer, then it hasn't shown evidence of that," Professor Olver said. "The data had been somewhat equivocal in the past, and some smaller, observational studies suggested they may be an effect."

However, Professor Olver said it was equally comforting to know that folate supplementation did not seem to promote tumour development, as had been suspected by some experts.

(JAMA 2008;300:2012-21).

Medical Observer, 14/11/08, p5; Australian Doctor, 14/11/08, p8

Prevention: vegies vs lung cancer

Evidence that fruit and vegetables protect against lung cancer is sketchy, but new data add some weight to the association.

US researchers prospectively examined associations between lung cancer risk and fruit and vegetables intake in 472,000 people aged 50-71. Total intake was unrelated to lung cancer risk, but several specific botanical subgroups were inversely associated with risk in men. For example, the men in the highest quintiles on intake of rosaceae (including stone fruit, apples and pears) had an 18% lower risk, and those who ate the most convulvulaceae (including sweet potato and water spinach) had a 14% lower risk compared with those who are least.

(American Journal of Epidemiology 2008;168:1024-34).

Australian Doctor, 14/11/08, p17

Public health: Vaccine wins prize

The Australian pioneered cervical cancer vaccine Gardasil, has been awarded the drug industry equivalent of a Nobel Prize. It beat major blockbuster cancer drugs and an anti-smoking medication to win the pharmaceutical industry's top gong, the International Prix Galien - a biennial prize given to the most outstanding and innovative drug introduced to the public market.

Queensland designer of the vaccine, acclaimed immunologist Ian Frazer, said the drug was a "major public health breakthrough" that could "prevent a quarter of a million deaths worldwide" yearly. "In this sense this vaccine is getting the recognition it deserves," Professor Frazer said.

Gardasil beat Australian approved cancer treatments Avastin and Erbitux - both credited with slowing the growth of tumours in several types of cancer - to win the award.

Courier Mail, 18/11/08, p19; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18/11/08, p5; *Herald Sun*, 18/11/08, p30; *Daily Telegraph*, 18/11/08, p5; *Adelaide Advertiser*, 18/11/08, p2; *Hobart Mercury*, 18/11/08, p13

Public health: MRI wait blows out to seven months (WA)

The waiting time for patients needing non-urgent MRIs at one of Perth's biggest hospitals has blown out to seven months because of delays in installing a new machine.

Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital confirmed yesterday that patients needing routine MRI were facing even longer delays until a new MRI unit was installed next April to replace one of the hospital's two machines which broke down last August.

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and the Australian Medical Association in WA have previously condemned the delay in obtaining the replacement machine, arguing it should have been ordered when concerns were raised early last year that the older machine had reached its use-by date.

Meanwhile, an extra 10,000 Perth patients a year will soon be able to have a free MRI under a deal between the Federal Government and a private radiology firm.

SKG Radiology has been awarded contracts to provide MRI in the Joondalup and Armadale areas which for the first time will see patients having scans at private clinics with no out of pocket expenses.

Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon said Perth's two new Medicare-eligible MRI services were expected to be operating by the second half of next year and would be free to patients because SKG had waived extra fees.

West Australian, 18/11/08, p5

Research: HPV vaccine may cut other cancers

HPV vaccines for cervical cancer may hold great promise in reducing the burden of other HPV-related malignancies, especially anal and head and neck cancers, US researchers say. Writing in *Cancer* (online), the researchers said it was now accepted that a proportion of anal, oropharyngeal, vulvar and vaginal cancers among women, and anal, oropharyngeal, and penile cancers among men, were aetiologically related to HPV.

Furthermore, the latest data showed that the annual number of non-cervical cancers caused by HPV roughly equalled the number of cervical cancers, they said, with an equal number of non-cervical cases among men and women, they said.

And whereas the incidence of cervical cancers has been decreasing, the incidence of anal and oropharyngeal cancers, for which there are no effective screening programs, is on the increase.

Given that between 86% and 95% of non-cervical cancers are caused by the HPV types 16 and 18, included in the current HPV vaccines, vaccination might have the potential to prevent

these cancers in many patients, the authors said.

The data was encouraging they said, but more research was needed to demonstrate that the vaccination was as effective in anatomical sites of infection other than the cervix.

Australian Doctor, 14/11/08, p1

Research: cancer cells leaving clues

Tumour cells provide a new way to track and treat cancer, with the discovery they release tiny sacs that travel through the blood, carrying genetic information about the tumour.

"Look at these packets and you basically know what kind of mutations are in the tumour cell," said study leader Xandra Breakefield.

Called exosomes, the "cell communication" may offer a way to deliver therapies back to the tumour from a simple blood test. For most cancers, only a biopsy would provide the same information.

MX Melbourne, 17/11/08, p13; MX Brisbane, 17/11/08, p8

Research: migraine may lower breast cancer risk

Postmenopausal women with a history of migraines may have a lower risk of developing breast cancer.

In the first study of its type, US researchers combined data from two population-based studies to examine the relationship between migraine and the risk of breast cancer among 1939 women who had a ductal or lobular carcinoma. The researchers then compared them with 1474 women without a history of migraine.

They found women who self reported a clinical diagnosis of migraine had a 33% lower risk of ductal carcinoma and a 32% lower risk of lobular carcinoma than did those free of migraines, irrespective of age at migraine diagnosis and medication use.

Professor Craig Anderson, director of neurological and mental health at The George Institute in Sydney, said the results supported the importance of oestrogen in the aetiology of breast cancer.

Based on the positive, well established link between endogenous hormone levels and the risk of hormone-receptor-positive breast cancer, the authors said: "The reductions in risk we observed were confined to hormone-receptor-positive tumours, lending further support to a possible underlying hormonal mechanism."

However, Dr Anne Nelson, general manager of the National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre, said: "Additional studies are needed to confirm this finding and....to distinguish whether any reduction in breast cancer risk is due to the fluctuation of hormone levels or the potential use of NSAIDs by migraine sufferers."

Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev 2008; 17(11):3116-22.

Medical Observer, 14/11/08, p7

Skin: vaccine will not be cure

Cancer experts fear the announcement of a new skin cancer vaccine may have a dangerous catch - making young Queenslanders complacent about sun safety.

Pioneering Brisbane scientist Professor Ian Frazer told the Australian Health and Medical Research Congress this morning that he was on the verge of a skin cancer vaccine, which may be available within the next five to 10 years.

Queensland Cancer Council Sunsmart coordinator Lisa Naumann praised Professor Frazer's research but warned that Queenslanders might "think its OK to go and get burnt". "Our biggest concern now is that people will think they can go out in the sun and not worry about the effects," she said. "The vaccine is still at least 10 years away so there's a lot of damage that could be done."

MX Brisbane, 17/11/08, p2

Nutrition: Junk food is 'not junk'

Advertising companies have done what they do best – and put a positive spin on junk food. They have rejected a proposal to ban junk food advertising to children, arguing the term is "derogatory" and that all food is healthy.

The Australian Association of National Advertisers has also tried to downplay the obesity epidemic, citing a Commonwealth study this year showed "no appreciable change in childhood obesity levels since 1995". "There is overwhelming evidence that food and beverages advertising to children is neither the primary nor a significant contributor to

childhood obesity," they say.
Adelaide Advertiser, 17/11/08, p9

Nutrition: Lollies ban in government schools from next year in bid to improve health (VIC)

Chocolates and lollies will be banned from Victorian Government school canteens and vending machines from next year. The sweets will be replaced with fruit, salads and fresh wraps under the State Government's plan to improve student health and stamina. About 100 schools will be audited in 2009 to ensure they comply with the confectionery ban. Tasmanian Premier David Bartlett said yesterday that Tasmania would not follow the Victorian Government.
Age, 17/11/08, p4; Hobart Mercury, 17/11/08, p4; Sunday Herald Sun, 16/11/08, p21

Obesity: Weighing up signs of obesity from birth

Children should be weighed and monitored for obesity from birth and throughout childhood to stop them becoming unhealthy adults, Flinders University experts say. Leading researchers claim the Federal Government's Healthy Kids Check plan to weigh all children from the age of four from next year is leaving it too late, because one in five children are overweight by the age of three.

Dr Anthea Magarey, a dietician with the Childhood Obesity Research Group at Flinders University and colleague Rebecca Perry want the Federal Government to consider an ongoing monitoring system – starting at birth – of weight, diet and activity.

Adelaide Advertiser, 17/11/08, p9; Courier Mail, 17/11/08, p9

Prevention: Boys may get cancer vaccine for girls

Pharmaceutical giant CSL will investigate the cost effectiveness of vaccinating young Australian boys with the cervical cancer vaccine Gardasil after the long-awaited results of a trial showed it slashed their risk of developing genital cancer.

A trial by Merck, CSL's American partner, found that Gardasil prevented 90% of genital warts and some precancerous lesions in males aged 16 to 26, ending speculation about whether the vaccine's effect would be as potent in boys and young men as it is in girls and young women.

The study of 4000 heterosexual and homosexual males found the vaccine prevented specific lesions, including early signs of penile and anal cancers caused by the human papilloma virus types 6,11, 16 and 18.

West Australian, 15/11/08, p3

Public health: Thousands die of avoidable causes (VIC)

A startling snapshot of Victoria's death toll has found that 63% of people aged under 75 die needlessly each year.

Lifestyle-related conditions such as heart disease, stroke and some cancers are responsible for more than half of all preventable deaths – amounting to thousands of lost lives each year.

The first analysis of its kind on avoidable deaths – covering a six-year period – found that 55,000 Victorians need not have died during the time of the study.

It also found that those in rural and disadvantaged areas were up to 48% more likely to die from a preventable causes.

Most of the top 10 killers are caused by lifestyle factors such as poor diet, lack of exercise, smoking and excessive alcohol consumption.

Sunday Age, 16/11/08, p9

Public health: Thousands die ahead of time (QLD)

The deaths of more than 5700 Queenslanders each year are preventable, the state's top doctor says. Chief Health Officer Jeanette Young said of the 7700 Queenslanders who died prematurely, or before age 75, in 2006, almost three-quarters were avoidable.

She said too many Queenslanders were dying earlier than they should from chronic conditions such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease, depression and respiratory illnesses.

Releasing her second Health of Queenslanders: Prevention of Chronic Disease report yesterday, Dr Young said thousands of lives could be saved annually if people lost weight, quit smoking and stopped abusing alcohol.

Courier Mail, 15/11/08, p7

Skin: Burning issue: teens lack sun smarts

Teenagers are still sunning themselves in the full heat of the day and blaming forgetfulness for their failure to protect themselves from high rates of sunburn.

A new report shows one in four teenagers continues to get sunburnt on a typical summer weekend, compared with just 14% of adults.

Adults appeared to be heeding warnings about peak UV periods, with just 67% going into the sun in the prime of the day in 2007 compared with 73% three years earlier.

But exposure among younger people increased from 80 to 82% over the same period, showing sun safety messages are not getting through. Almost a third who scorched themselves said they had "forgotten" to protect themselves.

Some teenagers also wrongly believed they needed to increase their sun exposure to get more vitamin D, despite guidelines stating most people received enough through normal daily activity, even with sun protection.

The CEO of Cancer Council Australia, which commissioned the National Sun Protection Survey, Professor Ian Olver, said that among teens who saw media reports about vitamin D, 17% said the reports "made them think they needed to go out in the sun more without protection in order to get enough vitamin D".

"Adults are clearly getting the message, but we need to more effectively target younger people," he said.

The Cancer Council questioned 652 teens between the ages of 12 and 17, and 5085 adults nationwide over the summer of 2006-2007. It will release its findings today to coincide with National Skin Cancer Action Week.

Canberra Times, 17/11/08, p3; Age, 17/11/08, p4; West Australian, 17/11/08, p3; Adelaide Advertiser, 17/11/08, p27; Hobart Mercury, 17/11/08; p5

Skin: Trials of new drug a success

The pioneering Australian scientist who discovered the cure for cervical cancer is on the verge of creating the world's first vaccine for skin cancer. Professor Ian Frazer, has revealed the vaccine could be ready within the next five to 10 years.

As with the jab now given to millions of young girls each year to prevent cervical cancer, children aged between 10 and 12 would be given the vaccine to prevent skin cancer later in life, Professor Frazer envisages.

Testing on animals has shown the vaccine to be successful and human trials will start next year.

Professor Frazer will reveal this ground-breaking skin work at the Australian Health and Medical Research Congress to be held in Brisbane on Monday.

"If we get encouraging results we will try and push it on as fast as we can." The new skin cancer vaccine works by targeting papilloma-virus, a common skin infection that affects most people and can linger in the body, turning abnormal cells into cancer.

Professor Frazer and his team from the Diamantina Institute at the University of Queensland are focusing on preventing squamous-cell skin cancer, which is strongly linked to papillomavirus.

It's not yet known if melanomas, which are the most deadly form of skin cancer, are also caused by papillomavirus.

The new vaccine is part of a two-pronged approach to tackle skin cancer. The other approach involves "switching off" one of the skin's controls to allow killer cells to destroy potentially cancerous cells.

Sunday Telegraph, 16/11/08, p4; Canberra Times, 17/11/08, p3; Daily Telegraph, 17/11/08, p7; Adelaide Advertiser, 17/11/08, p23; Sunday Tasmanian, 16/11/08, p11; Sunday Mail Adelaide, 16/11/08, p1; Sunday Herald Sun, 16/11/08, p3; Sunday Territorian, 16/11/08, p8; Sunday Mail Brisbane, 16/11/08, p9; Sunday Times, 16/11/08, p3

Skin: Kiwis rank worst for melanomas

New Zealand has edged out Australia to have the world's worst rate of melanomas, researchers have found. Dr Richard Martin from the New Zealand Melanoma Unit compared the skin cancer rates between the two countries and found the Kiwis had slightly higher chances of suffering the dangerous cancer.

His unpublished research found about 44 New Zealanders per 100,000 were diagnosed with melanomas each year. In Australia the rate was about 40 per 100,000.

Hobart Mercury, 15/11/08, p21

Physical activity: Women take simple steps to better health: walking

The number of middle-aged women walking regularly for exercise has risen significantly in recent years, reducing their risk of heart disease, some cancers, diabetes, arthritis and mental illness.

The proportion of women aged over 45 doing 30 minutes of exercise on most days jumped from 45 to 54% in the three years to 2004 as an increasing number of middle-aged women took up regular walking, according to a Federal Government report to be released today.

The report says research around the world provides evidence that women in this age group can gain considerable health benefits from regular exercise.

The findings support the Rudd Government's drive for people to exercise for their health's sake and come as another report says Australian baby boomers will have to do much more to prevent chronic disease to combat the soaring cost of health services for an ageing population.

Sydney Morning Herald, 14/11/08, p5

Skin: Bronzed chests can be a killer

After the successful Dark Side of Tanning campaign targeting females last summer, this year it is men who will be the focus.

The TV campaign will be launched this Sunday in a bid to convince guys they are just as sexy without a tan.

NSW Cancer Institute data released yesterday showed cancer deaths continue to fall in NSW but cases being diagnosed is rising, with new cases predicted to reach 38,807 this year.

Daily Telegraph, 14/11/08, p15

Tobacco: Warning on lung disease

More than two million Australians suffer a debilitating smoking-related lung disease and their numbers are tipped to double in the next 40 years.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease takes a bigger toll on the health of Australians than most cancers, heart disease and diabetes, an Access Economics report shows.

It shows the condition, comprising emphysema and chronic bronchitis, claims a life every 30 minutes, and will kill 16,004 Australians this year.

Herald Sun, 14/11/08, p25

Tobacco: Cigs giant pleads for tax break

One of Australia's biggest tobacco companies has asked the Federal Government for a tax cut. In a submission to the Treasury's review of the tax system, British American Tobacco Australia has called for a reduction in the corporate tax rate and the abolition of state payroll taxes.

The cigarette manufacturer also warned the Government against increasing tobacco taxes. It said rises in excise above regular six-monthly increases linked to inflation could encourage poorer smokers to buy black-market products and reduce Government revenue.

Professor Simon Chapman of the University of Sydney School of Health accused the company of displaying "naked self-interest." He said more tax rises on cigarettes were needed to drive down smoking rates.

Quit Victoria executive Fiona Sharkie said Australia had among the lowest taxes on cigarettes in the first world. She said Australia had not increased tobacco excise above the inflation rate since 2001, despite the World Health Organisation recommending annual 5% rises.

Herald Sun, 14/11/08, p27

Treatment: Cancer breakthrough

Scientists said yesterday they had found the reason some women develop resistance to tamoxifen. A genetic "switch" prevents tamoxifen from denying cancer cells access to estrogen, the hormone they need to grow, they said.

The study, by a team from Cancer Research UK, is published by the British-based journal *Nature*.

Tamoxifen has played an essential part in slashing the death rate from breast cancer in advanced economies.

Prevention: Extra vitamins don't cut risks

Vitamin supplements do not reduce the risk of heart attacks, strokes or breast cancer, according to two big studies published in the US yesterday. In one, 14,641 middle-age men took vitamins E and C for an average of eight years but did not see any benefit to their cardiovascular health. The other study tracked 36,282 postmenopausal women for an average of seven years and found that daily vitamin D and calcium did not protect against invasive breast cancer.
West Australian, 13/11/08, p36

Prevention: Disturbing results halt prostate trial

A major trial into the prevention of prostate cancer has been halted. Funded by the National Cancer Institutes, it involved 35,000 men and showed that vitamin E and selenium, taken in combination or alone, did not prevent the cancer. Men taking vitamin E alone had a slightly higher rate of prostate cancer and those taking selenium alone were more likely to develop diabetes. Neither trend was statistically significant and may yet prove to be due to chance.
Australian Financial Review, 13/11/08, p74

Research: All cancers of unknown origin could be the same

A new light has been shone on one of the darkest cancers. Every year, about 4500 Australians are diagnosed with cancer of unknown origin. Now a major study by the Cancer Institute NSW has provided a new lead in research and uncovered one small area of hope. It has raised the possibility that these mystery cancers are actually a specific type of cancer themselves, with a distinct genetic makeup. "There is something different biologically about these unknown primaries," says Jim Bishop, professor and chief executive of the institute. "We have speculated that perhaps they are coming from a stem cell or an undifferentiated cell, a cell that metastasises almost immediately without the primary site becoming a problem." The new lead suggests there may be a genetic form of treatment in the future that attacks the mutation directly or attacks a product of the gene.
Australian Financial Review, 13/11/08, p74

Tobacco: Smoke-free Tour (SA)

The State Opposition will move to amend local government laws to make next year's Tour Down Under cycling race smoke free. The Opposition said the change would give councils hosting the international cycling race in January the power to ban smoking in outdoor public areas. Upper House leader David Ridgway said the move would show support for cycling legend Lance Armstrong's campaign to fight cancer.
Adelaide Advertiser, 13/11/08

Detection: Senate to examine gene patents

A senate inquiry will examine the patenting of genes after a Melbourne-based company secured exclusive rights to testing for breast cancer genes. From November 6, Genetic Technologies secured rights to the testing of two genes – BRCA1 and BRCA2 – that are associated with high risks of breast cancer. Hundreds of tests at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute and the Royal Melbourne Hospital each year will no longer be carried out. The \$2100 test will still be available on the public purse only if family history suggests women are at risk. Cancer specialists fear the monopoly could raise prices, stop research and encourage profit-motivated marketing. Liberal Senator Bill Heffernan yesterday announced that a Senate inquiry would examine gene patents, saying: "Patents should be for inventions, not for naturally occurring genes."
Age, 12/11/08, p12

Obesity: War on obesity

Weight-loss surgery would be part of the Rudd Government's anti-obesity strategy, Health Minister Nicola Roxon confirmed yesterday. Ms Roxon said the procedure should be more widely available to Australians with serious

weight problems.

"There is a role for lap-banding in the Government's obesity strategy," she said. "It is not the frontline strategy – that must be preventing obesity. But, of course, prevention won't work for everyone, so for morbidly obese people it's important that lap-banding remains an option."

Herald Sun, 12/11/08, p5

Obesity: Extreme exercise and diet programs 'a risk'

Some dieting and exercise programs may cause more harm than good, a parliamentary inquiry into obesity has been told.

A submission by The Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, co-written by child health authority Professor Fiona Stanley, warned that "toughening-up" exercise and diet programs were not the simple answer to the obesity epidemic.

The submission was presented to the inquiry on Friday. "We fear that there is a risk, if exercise and diet strategies are taken to extremes, that they could cause harm to some people," it said.

"Extreme diets may have unwanted side effects. While high levels of LDL cholesterol have been linked with heart disease, low levels have been linked with depression and attempted self-harm."

The institute's submission criticised other arguments presented to the Inquiry into Obesity in Australia. It said some recommended diet and exercise programs that "had never been properly tested and (were) based on some measure of faith or belief".

Sunday Mail Adelaide, 9/11/08, p36; Sunday Times, 9/11/08, p28; Sunday Territorian, 9/11/08, p8

Skin: More cancer clinics 'vital' as sun's toll rises (VIC)

Victorians with potentially fatal skin cancers are waiting up to nine months for treatment as new figures reveal rates of the disease are set to double by 2020.

The looming crisis has prompted Health Minister Daniel Andrews to consider a statewide roll-out of free skin cancer triage clinics.

The State Government is considering using Australia's first free skin cancer triage clinic at St Vincent's Hospital as a template for a wide-spread roll-out.

It has proved 10 times more cost-effective than the previous system.

Sunday Age, 9/11/08, p5

Treatment: Cancer fight powers up

France has revealed what scientists describe as the world's most powerful cyclotron to treat cancer. The machine splits the atom and accelerates cancer-fighting protons to nearly the speed of light.

Radioactive protons are then delivered in precise doses to kill tumours in cancer patients.

The Arronax cyclotron is said to be three to four times more powerful than most comparable machines.

Research: Genetic map points the way to cures

A Melbourne-led, world first project to translate the human genetic map into a resource for medicine has made the jump from ambition to action. The Human Variome Project aims to describe how mutations within our genetic code are linked to various diseases and inherited conditions such as cancer or cystic fibrosis.

Its founders say it will be the successor to the Human Genome Project and help change the way disease is treated and prevented.

The \$18 million project was proposed in 2006 at a meeting of international experts in Melbourne.

Laboratories around the world are engaged in analysing the genetic variations that affect human health – and the amount of valuable information being generated is growing exponentially.

However, previous attempts to gather that information together in one, globally accessible resource were limited by scale and a lack of funding.

The HVP has a new funding model that it calls "Adopt a Gene", by which industry and patient-support groups sponsor the curation of specific genes.

Age, 7/11/08, p3

Treatment: Cancer drug funding push

Australians with advanced bowel cancer may soon get subsidised access to a drug that works only on people with a specific genetic make-up. Drug company Merck Serono is applying to have Erbitux funded through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. It benefits patients with particular types of genes. The treatment slows tumour growth but is not a cure.

Adelaide Advertiser, 7/11/08, p31

Treatment: Living brain tissue created from cells

Japanese researchers say they have created functioning human brain tissues from stem cells, a world first that raises new hopes for the treatment of disease.

Stem cells taken from human embryos have been used to form tissues of the cerebral cortex, according to researchers at the government-backed research institute Riken.

The tissues self-organised into four distinct zones very similar to the structure seen in human foetuses, and conducted neuro-activity such as transmitting electrical signals, the institute said.

The team's previous studies showed stem cells differentiated into different cells but until now they had never organised into functioning tissues.

Adelaide Advertiser, 7/11/08, p36

Research: New leukaemia genes detected

US scientists have found eight new genes linked to a deadly form of leukaemia, thanks to advances in the speed of gene-scanning technology.

The success of the research raises hopes the technique will lead to a flurry of similar genetic discoveries for a wide range of diseases.

Researchers led by Richard Wilson, of Washington University in St Louis, identified the cancer-linked genes by scanning the entire genetic makeup of cells taken from a patient with acute myeloid leukaemia, a highly malignant cancer of white blood cells.

They also scanned the entire genetic content of healthy skin cells from the same patient, to show which genes are mutated in the cancerous cells.

They found 10 genes that showed significant differences in the cancer cells compared with healthy cells. Two of the genes were previously linked to cancer, but the remaining eight were new discoveries, the researchers report in today's issue of the journal *Nature*.

West Australian, 6/11/08, p15; Age, 6/11/08, p13

Risk: Study clears devices

Wireless gadgets like cordless phones and baby monitors emit "miniscule" levels of radiation, according to an Australian study that rules the technology safe.

Scientists tested levels of electromagnetic waves in 20 Melbourne homes after some studies raised questions about health hazards.

"Essentially, everything was extremely low, ranging from being about 10,000 times lower than the national standards to being 10 times below," said lead researcher Professor Rodney Croft of the Australian Centre for Radiofrequency Bioeffects Research. "With such miniscule levels, it's very hard to conceive of how there could be a problem at such low levels."

The results will be released at a Swinburne University of Technology forum next week.

Hobart Mercury, 6/11/08, p16

Treatment: Anti-cancer drug in advanced trials

Adelaide biotechnology company Bionomics will focus on clinical trials for its anti-cancer drug BNC105...this year, managing director Deborah Rathjen said.

BNC105, which blocks blood supply to solid tumours and attacking cancer cells, is expected to advance to Phase II trials in 2009. The drug could potentially be applied across colon, lung and breast cancers.

Adelaide Advertiser, 6/11/08, p62

Treatment: Cancer drugs too costly under budget changes

Patients could miss out on life-saving cancer drugs, with co-payments for patients and hospitals expected to jump when a "rushed" Federal budget initiative is introduced next year, oncologists warn.

Some private hospitals might also stop providing cancer treatment because they would lose

money for providing chemotherapy, said Dr John Bashford, president of the Private Cancer Physicians of Australia Association.

Under the cost-saving measure, to take effect on 1 July next year, pharmacies will be reimbursed on a per-milligram basis for dispensing PBS-listed chemotherapy doses, rather than per vial as currently occurs. As a result, hospitals would not be fully reimbursed for partially used vials, Dr Bashford said.

Cancer Council Australia CEO Professor Ian Olver said there was a "potential for disruption of supply, but whether [this will occur] is to be seen". However, the council would monitor the situation.

Australian Doctor, 7/11/08, p6

Treatment: Side effects from hormonal therapy a positive sign in breast cancer

Breast cancer patients who experience certain side effects from hormonal treatment can be reassured that the treatment is working, evidence suggests.

Vasomotor and joint symptoms caused by tamoxifen or anastrozole might predict a lower cancer recurrence rate, a study of almost 4000 women found.

Patients on the treatments who experienced both symptoms were almost 50% less likely to have a recurrence after three months than those with no symptoms.

Professor Ian Olver, CEO of Cancer Council Australia, said hot flushes and joint pain experienced by patients were indications that the treatment was having the expected effect on hormone levels. "[This evidence] can be used by GPs to reassure patients, who might be put off, that the side effects are a good thing," he said.

The research is in *Lancet Oncology* online.

Australian Doctor, 7/11/08, p8

Detection: Breast check confusion

Australian women believe in checking their breasts for signs of cancer but fewer than half do, a survey has found.

Breast self-examination is the most effective way for younger women to detect a cancerous lump, but new research shows that while most are positive about it, they are confused about how to do it.

An internet survey of 2400 women, most aged under 50, found 97% believe in checking their breasts regularly but only 44% do it.

Oncologist Paul Crea, from St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, said the results highlighted a "major disconnect". "This significant breast health survey confirms the pressing need to help women change their behaviour when it comes to breast health."

The survey, by an online business initiative MAD About Breasts, also indicated confusion about what self-checking procedure to use. There was confusion about the benefits of mammography for younger women, with three-quarters believing screening should start at the age of 30 rather than 50.

Hobart Mercury, 5/11/08, p15; Adelaide Advertiser, 5/11/08, p2; Age, 5/11/08, p8; Herald Sun, 5/11/08, p13; Canberra Times, 5/11/08, p2

Obesity: Linking obesity, cancer

The fact that obesity raises the risk for endometrial cancer appears to be poorly understood among some women.

Researchers studied a survey completed by 1545 US women and found that 58% were not aware that obesity increased risk for endometrial cancer.

There was no difference in knowledge of endometrial cancer risk associated with any of the demographic characteristics studied, they report.

Research is published in *Obstetrics and Gynecology*.

Australian Doctor, 31/10/08, p21

Risk: Sleep and cancer link

Women who regularly sleep six hours or less a night may be raising their risk of breast cancer by more than 60%, Japanese researchers say.

Scientists believe sleep disruption interferes with production of the hormone melatonin, which could play an important role in protecting against cancer.

The latest investigation, published in the *British Journal of Cancer*, provides strong evidence getting enough sleep is crucial to prevent breast tumours. Japanese scientists tracked the

lifestyle of 24,000 women over eight years.
Adelaide Advertiser, 4/11/08, p28

Tobacco: 90% support ban (SA)

Almost one in three smokers say a smoking ban in South Australian pubs and clubs makes it more likely they will quit the habit, a new Cancer Council report shows.
Nine in every 10 people support the SA ban on smoking in indoor public places, introduced by the State Government one year ago.
Substance Abuse Minister Jane Lomax-Smith said the report indicated 72% of smokers and 82% of licensed venue managers agreed with the legislation.
Adelaide Advertiser, 4/11/08, p2

Detection: Tumour 'missed'

BreastScreen QLD radiologists failed to detect a malignant tumour in a woman on the Sunshine Coast, a claim filed in the Supreme Court in QLD alleges. She is the second breast cancer sufferer to file for damages in the Supreme Court in the past month over alleged medical negligence.
Courier Mail, 1/11/08, p15

Nutrition: Kerry cola ad faces axe

A controversial advertising campaign in which Australian actor Kerry Armstrong says Coca-Cola is not unhealthy, is facing the axe.
The future of the "myth-busting" advertisement will be decided by the Advertising Standards Bureau next month.
Kathy Chapman, nutrition program manager at the Cancer Council NSW, said the marketing tactic was objectionable and misleading. "People will think the formulation has changed or there's something different in the product, but it's still high in sugar, high in caffeine and it's not good for you or your waistline", she said.
Sunday Mail Brisbane, 2/11/08, p26; Sunday Telegraph, 2/11/08, p17; Sunday Herald Sun, 2/11/08, p15

Prevention: Allergies could ward off cancers

Allergies could be more than just a frustrating immune condition – they may provide protection against a range of cancers. Researchers at New York's Cornell University have found allergies can help in the fight against cancer by expelling carcinogenic particles from the body.
Researchers have previously suspected an association between allergies and cancer, but past results have been inconclusive.
The Cornell researchers re-examined 650 studies undertaken over the past five decades and found allergy-cancer associations more common with organ cancer systems that come into direct contact with matter from the external environment.
Sunday Canberra Times, 2/11/08, p4

Prevention: Vaccine booster

New Zealand scientists have created a vaccine booster that could help improve a new cancer vaccine. Scientists at Industrial Research Limited in Wellington say they have created a synthetic vaccine that could work across a range of vaccines against viruses, bacteria and cancer.
Vaccines often need a booster or adjuvant to boost the immune response to a vaccine. But the associated toxic side effects have prevented these adjuvants being used in humans. The research body's adjuvant is a glycolipid, a carbohydrate-based molecule derived from the cell wall of mycobacteria. It appears to have a similar immune system stimulating effect, without the dangerous side effects.
Canberra Times, 3/11/08, p6

Support: \$1.1m for cancer kits

The Federal Government has given \$1.1 million to Breast Cancer Network Australia to pay for resource kits for women with the disease.
Health Minister Nicola Roxon said yesterday the funding would pay for production, promotion and delivery of information kits to women diagnosed with breast cancer.

Adelaide Advertiser, 1/11/08, p54

Treatment: Blood test offers better prostate cancer measure

Australian doctors say the chances of finding better ways to treat prostate cancer have been boosted by the discovery that the blood test commonly used to detect the disease could also help identify which drugs are most effective in combating the condition.

Researchers have identified a new way to measure how well patients do with experimental treatments using the prostate specific antigen or PSA blood test.

They say it could halve the length of time of future clinical trials in prostate cancer and accelerate progress towards a cure.

Their results, published in the *Lancet Oncology* this week, show that two measures of PSA can show how quickly prostate cancer has returned and the rate at which it is growing, thereby allowing doctors to track the effects of new drugs over a shorter time.

West Australian, 1/11/08, p62

Treatment: Super cells fight cancer

Scientists have created super-charged immune cells that helped beat back cancer tumours in half of a small group of patients tested. Adding an artificial receptor to T-lymphocytes immune cells boosted their ability to fight a deadly form of cancer called neuroblastoma, according to a study released today.

In their natural state, T-lymphocytes do not survive long and lack the molecules that would target cancer cells in tumours. To overcome this double deficiency, a team of researchers led by Malcolm Brenner at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, first selected immune cells naturally stimulated by a common but harmless virus called Epstein-Barr.

Australian, 3/11/08, p6

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.