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## New generation drug therapy targets the individual

Pharmaceutical News

Published: Saturday, 5-Jun-2004

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The days of 'one size fits all' medicines may soon be a thing of the past for people undergoing radical drug therapies for chronic or serious illnesses.

Chemotherapy with few side effects is just one of the possible breakthroughs in what is a new wave of medical technology tipped to deliver personalised medicine, according to [UniSA's](#) Associate Professor Ross McKinnon.

Leader of the South Australian Clinical Pharmacogenomics Initiative, Prof McKinnon says the new research program based at UniSA, aims to harness recent technological advances to improve drug therapies and patient recovery.

"Previously unimagined insights into human biology and an array of remarkable new technologies will revolutionise medical outcomes for many patients through new approaches to drug therapy," says Prof McKinnon.

Prof McKinnon will talk about the implications of the landmark Human Genome Project as we move toward an era of personalised medicine in a free public lecture, Delivering a Dose of Good Science to the Art of Medicine, Wednesday 9 June 2004, 6.00-7.00pm, Centenary Building (Room C3-16), City East campus. UniSA.

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According to Prof McKinnon, the sheer volume of new biological information is daunting, and harnessing it to yield real medical advances poses considerable challenges.

"But the science already exists, in part, for us deliver personalised drug therapy that predicts and therefore moderates the side effects a patient might expect from a particular medication," says Prof McKinnon.

"Already we are working on the side effects of the drug Capecitabine, a chemotherapy treatment used to treat some types of cancer, including advanced bowel cancer, breast cancer and ovarian cancer.

"Every person has a different reaction to chemotherapy which might be nausea, mouth ulcers, headaches, dizziness, through to debilitating loss of mobility, or a combination of several of these.

"For some people, especially those suffering end-stage cancer, severe side effects cause further physical and emotional distress in what is already a devastating situation.

"What we are working on is identifying the individual's genetic and chemical fingerprint from which we can then predict the possible side effects to this medication. Capercitabine can then be administered at a level that will preclude the most damaging side effects, possibly eliminating them altogether.

"Advances in biomedical science will help build a much broader profile of individual biology. We are on the cusp of delivering far more efficient drug therapy than ever before."

The South Australian Clinical Pharmacogenomics Initiative brings together diverse groups, including scientists, information technologists and clinicians, who are working to turn research breakthroughs into tangible medical therapies.

"The application of personalised medicine has enormous potential to relieve patient suffering. There are also significant economic benefits. With improved medical outcomes from more efficient, personalised treatment there will be less nursing hours and health resources required for each patient. This will free up resources which can be reallocated in an already stretched health system.

"It promises a win/win situation for the health profession and the community."


Ross McKinnon is an Associate Professor in the School of Pharmacy and Medical Sciences at UniSA and key researcher in the Centre for Pharmaceutical Research.

He has worked in a broad range of community and hospital pharmacy settings and more recently, in genetic research.

<http://www.unisa.edu.au/>

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