

Funds help studies in ovarian cancer fight

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AUSTRALIAN researchers are testing if transforming rogue immune cells that help cancer cells survive can treat the most aggressive type of ovarian cancer.

The project is one of two sharing \$550,000 from the Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation.

Dr Ashleigh Poh, from the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Research Institute, and La-

trobe University's School of Cancer Medicine are co-leading a project looking at how immune cells can be hijacked by tumours, so instead of "cleaning up" cellular debris they help cancer grow. Their focus is HCK, a protein found on these immune cells.

Dr Poh has found that not only can anti-HCK drugs slow the growth and spread of high-grade serous ovarian cancer in mice, but these drugs

can boost the effectiveness of existing therapies. She said the funding would allow them to continue their preclinical studies, as well as retrospectively analyse patient datasets to determine what women may have benefited from potential new therapies.

"These findings really suggest to us that targeting HCK in combination with existing therapies could potentially lead to the development of

new therapies and improve treatment outcomes for patients across a broad range of cancers," Dr Poh said.

The other funded project will be led by the Hudson Institute of Medical Research, also looking at developing a new treatment for this most common type of ovarian cancer.

Professor Ron Firestein is investigating ways to disrupt how a protein boosts the ability of cancer cells to grow.