

Rogue cell research in crucial ovarian cancer fight

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VICTORIAN researchers are testing if transforming rogue immune cells that help cancer survive can be a radical new way to treat the most aggressive type of ovarian cancer.

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

There is no early detection test for ovarian cancer and up to five Australian women are diagnosed each day.

Almost half will still be alive five years later.

Ashleigh Poh, from the Olivia Newton John Cancer Research Institute and Latrobe University's School of Cancer Medicine, is co-leading a project looking at

how immune cells can be hijacked by tumours, so that 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 not only can anti-HCK drugs slow the growth and spread of high-grade ovarian cancer in mice,

but they make existing therapies more effective. She said the OCRF funding would allow researchers to continue pre-clinical 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 for a new treatment for ovarian cancer.