

Sharing information to benefit research

Melbourne Health is leading the development of a data system that will allow clinical and scientific data to be shared by Australian research organisations.

The Molecular Medicine Informatics Model (MMIM) began as a small data-sharing project and has since received \$4.3 million Federal Government funding and \$11 million State Government funding to expand the model across Australia.



MMIM will form the basis of the proposed Australian Cancer Grid Research Platform to allow collaborative research between the nation's leading cancer researchers.

The MMIM Steering Committee comprises Melbourne Health's Rob Merriel (Chair), A/Prof Peter Gibbs, Prof Peter Colman and A/Prof Terry O'Brien, who also have appointments with the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research (WEHI) and The University of Melbourne respectively. The Project Director is Dr Marienne Hibbert.

Over the last five years, the project has successfully integrated research data and clinical information for colorectal cancer, epilepsy and diabetes across five hospitals (RMH, Western Hospital, Austin Hospital, Peter MacCallum and The Alfred).

The second phase included respiratory medicine and had expanded to St Vincent's Hospital and Monash Medical Centre, with links to other Melbourne and interstate hospitals.

The final phase will allow the data system to be shared with Australia's leading clinical and research institutes.

Dr Marienne Hibbert says the project protects the privacy and security of the data while helping collaborative efforts among researchers.

"The MMIM project is cutting edge. Many people internationally talk of doing it, but Australian researchers are already linking clinical data with new data from genetic research to refine treatment and improve prevention and screening practices.

"In the past, this information was not available or extremely difficult to obtain and required researchers to decipher clinical information and burrow through hospital files.

"MMIM will deliver the platform that will ultimately improve diagnosis and treatment, and we are leading the way," said Dr Hibbert.

Article from 'Melbourne Health Matters' Issue 18 – Spring 2007

<http://www.mh.org.au/www/342/1001127/displayarticle/1001518.html>