LUDWIG INSTITUTE FOR CANCER RESEARCH

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Dear Tour de Cure and Hogbin family,

I would like to offer an enormous THANK-YOU for your support.

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to know someone who is in an active battle with cancer. During these difficult times we do everything that we can to be supportive of our family and friends – and organizations like yours exemplify what a group of people who are driven to win this battle can accomplish. As researchers, we dedicate our lives to finding a cure and we wouldn't be able to do this without the financial support of organizations such as your own. Over the course of the next year I hope to demonstrate to you just how powerful of a partnership this can be.

Gastrointestinal cancers arise when abnormal cells grow out from otherwise normal tissue. The resulting tumours contain a number of different types of cells, some of which help the tumour to grow, and some of which fight the tumour. I am interested in understanding how soluble molecules called cytokines influence the cells that promote tumour growth. In particular, I am investigating the role of a cytokine called Interleukin-11 in these processes to identify novel cancer therapies.

We are only just starting to untangle the complicated web of genetics and environmental insults that lead to cancer. We spend our days in the lab analyzing models of gastrointestinal cancer development, which we compare directly to human cancers in order to understand the genes involved. By no means is any research the effort of a single person. For this project we collaborate with a group who has designed an Interleukin-11 antagonist which we are currently testing in our gastrointestinal cancer models. It is the aim of my research to understand the role of Interleukin-11 in driving tumour formation, and the efficacy of inhibiting its activity in cancer treatment.

It's a long road to find new treatments for cancers. We need to understand the cancer, develop pharmaceuticals to treat the cancer, check that the pharmaceuticals do what we hope they will in our models, and then move them into clinical settings for patients. This project is particularly exciting because it has the potential to go from "the bench, to the bedside" soon. This is every cancer researcher's dream scenario – to watch all of the hard work that we do in a lab translate into something that can help a patient.

As post-doctoral fellows we are in a training period to prepare us to establish a research lab of our own, which I hope to do soon. I currently supervise an army of students and technicians who will assist in the battle against cancer. Your support is not only valuable to the research itself – but also to their development and the advancement of my independent research career. The more young scientists (and little armies) fighting cancer – the better!

On behalf of myself, my students and technicians, and the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research I sincerely thank-you for your encouragement and support. I also look forward to updating you on our accomplishments over the following year!

Kind regards,

Dr. Tracy Putoczki
Post-doctoral Research Fellow
Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research