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Australia establishes new international research lab to tackle treatment-resistant cancer

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Lab to be named ‘PHANTOM’ (Plasticity, Heterogeneity and Tumour Microenvironment)

The University of Melbourne and France's National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) will establish a new International Research Laboratory in Melbourne, Australia that expands and consolidates the existing collaboration between the cancer laboratory of Professor Frédéric Hollande, from the University of Melbourne, and that of Dr Patrick Mehlen (CNRS, Lyon).

Led by Professor Hollande and located at the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre (VCCC), the joint laboratory will accelerate research discoveries and enable clinical trials across the two countries.

A Letter of Intent was signed at the VCCC by Professor Mark Cassidy, University of Melbourne Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and Professor Antoine Petit, Chairman and CEO of CNRS.

This new CNRS International Research Laboratory, funded by CNRS and the University of Melbourne, cements a long-term partnership, building on an existing collaboration.

The joint laboratory will use state-of-the-art technological approaches to study how single cancer cells change over time in the body’s tissues to understand what is causing cancer cells to form and to adapt to their environment. It will be named ‘PHANTOM’ (Plasticity, Heterogeneity and Tumour Microenvironment).

Professor Hollande said the lab will tackle key genetic and non-genetic mechanisms which allow cancers to continually adapt, driving treatment resistance in tumours with poor survival outcomes like metastatic colorectal and pancreatic cancers.

Dr Mehlen said the lab will explore new potential drugs that can stop tumour adaptability and resistance to current cancer treatments.

Image caption- Professor Antoine Petit, CEO of the CNRS (left) and Professor Mark Cassidy, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) at the University of Melbourne