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Melbourne joins global consortium to advance drug discovery

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The University of Melbourne has joined the Structural Genomics Consortium (SGC) with the establishment of SGC-Melbourne, a new SGC Affiliated Site and the consortium's only site in Australasia.

SGC-Melbourne will enable Australian scientists to contribute directly to Target 2035, the SGC-led global mission to develop a pharmacological tool for every human protein by 2035.

Led by University of Melbourne Professor Megan Maher, an internationally acclaimed chemist, SGC-Melbourne will connect Australia's expertise in protein science, structural biology and chemical biology with the global SGC network, strengthening Australia's capacity to address rare and challenging diseases.

A key part of Target 2035 is to generate the data to develop the next generation of artificial intelligence (AI) tools for drug discovery. AI has the potential to transform early drug discovery by predicting which compounds are most likely to interact with specific proteins. However, progress is limited by a lack of large, high-quality and consistently generated experimental datasets.

Through Target 2035, the SGC is building a global network of academic and industry partners to generate and openly share the protein–compound interaction data needed to train and test machine-learning models. SGC-Melbourne will contribute Australian expertise, infrastructure and data to this international effort.

The long-term goal is to make pharmacological tool discovery increasingly computational, reducing experimental trial and error and accelerating the identification of promising starting points for future medicines.

SGC Chief Executive Officer Professor Aled Edwards said SGC-Melbourne will be an Australian data-generation hub integrated into the international Target 2035 initiative.

The University of Melbourne is part of the largest biomedical precinct in the southern hemisphere, bringing together world-leading expertise across multiple disciplines.