



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

News Release

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PRESS CALL

**12 NOON, FRIDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2016
EDINBURGH CANCER RESEARCH UK CENTRE
INSTITUTE OF GENETICS AND MOLECULAR MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
CREWE ROAD, EH4 2XU**

Minister launches research drive to cut cancer drug side effects

Minister for Life Sciences George Freeman is visiting laboratories in which researchers are developing new cancer treatments that have fewer side effects.

Mr Freeman will tomorrow (Friday) officially launch the project – based at the University of Edinburgh – which is receiving more than £1 million from the UK Government.

Scientists in the University's Edinburgh Cancer Research UK Centre at the Institute of Genetics and Molecular Medicine will use the investment to develop a new way of treating cancer.

Researchers are developing harmless metal implants that will be placed at the tumour site where they locally activate chemotherapy drugs.

The implants will alter the chemical composition of commonly-used chemotherapy drugs so that they only become active when they come into contact with a metal called palladium.

Funding for the project has come from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council's prestigious Healthcare Technologies Challenge Awards scheme.

The project is led by chemist Dr Asier Unciti-Broceta, a Reader at the University of Edinburgh, who works closely with biologists and cancer clinicians to develop new approaches to treating cancer with fewer side effects.

Professor Jonathan Seckl, Vice Principal for Research at the University of Edinburgh, said that while cancer medicine has improved dramatically over recent years, the side effects of current treatments can be arduous.

Ranked among the top universities in the world

He said: “Minimising the adverse effects of chemotherapy is one of the greatest challenges we face today. By locating a very talented chemist with the University’s leading biologists and outstanding cancer doctors, we have been able to come up with innovative new ways to target treatment to the cancer itself with fewer side effects.

“We have made some excellent progress and are confident that, with this generous new support, our efforts will improve the way cancers are treated in the future.”

Later in the day, Mr Freeman will visit the University of Edinburgh’s Roslin Institute, which is also benefitting from funding by the UK Government’s Department for Business Innovation and Skills.

Roslin scientists are working with more than 20 partners from other research institutes and the food industry to further innovation in livestock research aimed more effectively to provide food for people in the UK and globally.

Life Sciences Minister George Freeman MP said: “The University of Edinburgh and the city's cluster of innovative businesses play a leading role in developing medical innovations and interventions which save thousands of lives.

“That is why the UK Government invests hundreds of millions of pounds in Scotland's medical research, and why we are providing £1 million backing for this project as part of a £9 million package across other organisations to boost development of the next generation of medical technologies.”

For further information, please contact:

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