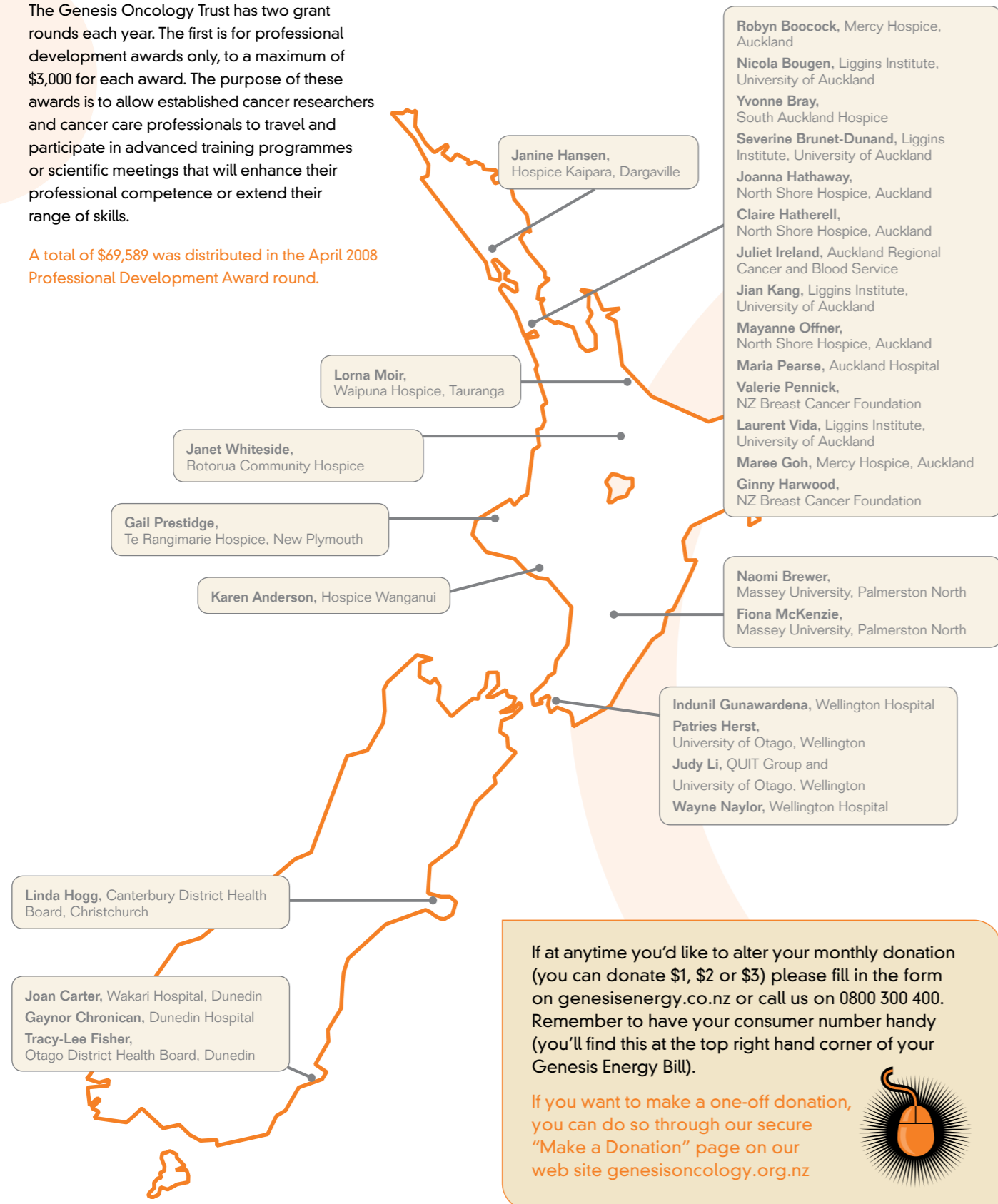


# Professional Development Awards

The Genesis Oncology Trust has two grant rounds each year. The first is for professional development awards only, to a maximum of \$3,000 for each award. The purpose of these awards is to allow established cancer researchers and cancer care professionals to travel and participate in advanced training programmes and scientific meetings that will enhance their professional competence or extend their range of skills.


A total of \$69,589 was distributed in the April 2008 Professional Development Award round.



**Robyn Boocock**, Mercy Hospice, Auckland  
**Nicola Bougen**, Liggins Institute, University of Auckland  
**Yvonne Bray**, South Auckland Hospice  
**Severine Brunet-Dunand**, Liggins Institute, University of Auckland  
**Joanna Hathaway**, North Shore Hospice, Auckland  
**Claire Hatherell**, North Shore Hospice, Auckland  
**Juliet Ireland**, Auckland Regional Cancer and Blood Service  
**Jian Kang**, Liggins Institute, University of Auckland  
**Mayanne Offner**, North Shore Hospice, Auckland  
**Maria Pearse**, Auckland Hospital  
**Valerie Pennick**, NZ Breast Cancer Foundation  
**Laurent Vida**, Liggins Institute, University of Auckland  
**Maree Goh**, Mercy Hospice, Auckland  
**Ginny Harwood**, NZ Breast Cancer Foundation

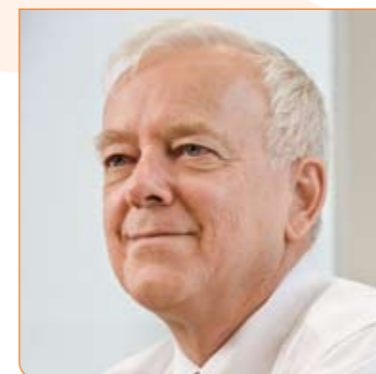
If at anytime you'd like to alter your monthly donation (you can donate \$1, \$2 or \$3) please fill in the form on [genesisoncology.co.nz](http://genesisoncology.co.nz) or call us on 0800 300 400. Remember to have your consumer number handy (you'll find this at the top right hand corner of your Genesis Energy Bill).

If you want to make a one-off donation, you can do so through our secure "Make a Donation" page on our web site [genesisoncology.org.nz](http://genesisoncology.org.nz)




# new hope

December 2008/January 2009



Albert Brantley

As the new Chief Executive of Genesis Energy and Chairman of the Genesis Oncology Trust I am excited to be part of an increasingly significant charitable trust. I applaud the efforts of the previous Chairman, Murray Jackson, in establishing and developing this unique cancer charity and can assure you that Genesis Energy will continue to give the Trust its full support. I'd like to thank you for supporting the Trust through your donation each month on your Genesis Energy bill.

Customer donations have made it possible for us to increase the amount available in the fight against cancer. The amount available to fund cancer-control research and education has increased from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 annually. The number of grant applications received in the 2008 round has doubled and we have 65 applications requesting a total

of \$4,000,000. The Trust programme manager Dr Douglas Ormrod and a team of local and overseas experts are currently assessing and ranking the applications to ensure that the funds are applied to the most worthy projects. Outcomes will be announced in mid December.

The Genesis Oncology Trust is unique amongst cancer charities in that grants are awarded to support research and education across the cancer control spectrum – from prevention, through laboratory research to end of life care. The two stories in this issue of New Hope illustrate this flexibility and I hope they give you an insight into the work of the Trust.

Albert Brantley  
Chairman, Genesis Oncology Trust

## Doing our part, making a difference...

Over the past six years, the Genesis Oncology Trust has invested nearly \$3 million in cancer control research and education in New Zealand. This is a lot of money; however, it is a small fraction of the international investment in cancer research. The combined annual expenditure of the USA and European nations in the field is in excess of US \$10 billion.

### So can the Genesis Oncology Trust's contribution really make a difference?

Yes, it can and to understand how, it is necessary to know how medical knowledge advances.

One of the most overused words in media reports of medical research is 'breakthrough'. While the occasional 'eureka' moment does occur, most advances are made by acquiring new pieces of knowledge through careful research and fitting these into the leading edge of existing knowledge. Before new information can be incorporated into the picture, it first has to pass the peer review process whereby experts in the field assess the way the knowledge was acquired and the validity of the conclusions.

Sometimes the new knowledge results in the opening up of a fresh avenue of research, sometimes it confirms a previous piece of research and sometimes it results in the closing off of a line of work that is not going to lead anywhere.

Some parts are more interesting or important than others – but, to complete the picture, every part must be pursued with passion.

The more money you have, the more knowledge you can bring to the table, but each piece has the potential to complete the picture. Unfortunately, you don't know in advance what the finished picture will look like.

Thus, the research that the Genesis Oncology Trust funds has as much value and potential as does research funded anywhere else in the world.



0800 300 400 [genesisoncology.org.nz](http://genesisoncology.org.nz)



# Immunotherapy – the new hope for people with leukaemia

Dr Robert Weinkove, Malaghan Institute of Medical Research, Wellington

**Dr Robert Weinkove is a UK-trained haematologist (blood specialist) who relocated to New Zealand in 2008. Dr Weinkove believes that to be a good doctor you need to do research.**

Dr Weinkove says, "I had read about the Cancer Immunotherapy Research Group at Wellington's Malaghan Institute. It was clear that this group is at the forefront of immunotherapy research so I made the decision to move to New Zealand. The Malaghan researchers helped me put together an excellent proposal and we were delighted to receive funding from the Genesis Oncology Trust."

Dr Weinkove's interest is in chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL). CLL occurs when white blood cells called B lymphocytes divide uncontrollably. They accumulate in the blood and bone marrow and crowd out normal blood cells, impairing the ability to fight infection and often giving rise to anaemia. CLL is the most common leukaemia and the prevalence increases with age. With New Zealanders living longer CLL will become more common.

Early stage CLL is not actively treated and many people die with it, but not of it, in old age. However, if the disease progresses there are currently only two treatment options: chemotherapy or bone marrow transplantation. Chemotherapy is often ineffective, and elderly people are not good candidates for bone marrow transplantation, so new treatments are needed.

The immune system is regulated by a finely tuned set of controls involving dozens of different cell types, proteins, carbohydrates and lipids. Most of the time, the immune system hums along happily but, on occasion, a control circuit is broken and one cell type starts to replicate out of control – this is leukaemia. Retaking control of the errant part of the system is the goal of Dr Weinkove's immunotherapeutic approach.

One treatment that has been investigated is to harvest immune cells called dendritic cells from the patient and stimulate them in the test tube to fight the leukaemia cells. The cells are then injected back into the patient. However, this has not worked well in people with CLL. Dr Weinkove believes the key to success is to introduce another cell into the test tube to further stimulate the dendritic cells. This cell goes by the name of invariant natural killer T cell or iNKT cell. These cells are not plentiful in the blood and much work is required to isolate and learn how to work with them, but in two or three years an effective new treatment for CLL may be available.

Dr Weinkove says, "Although the scientific community in New Zealand is relatively small, this does have advantages – it's easier to get to know the main players. There is tremendous willingness to cooperate on the part of other laboratories and organisations and, critically for my work, a great deal of enthusiasm from study volunteers!"



Dr Robert Weinkove

## Did you know?

Every cent of your monthly Genesis Oncology Trust donation goes directly to fund cancer research and professional education.

# End of life care – we can always do better

Ms Mary Schumacher, Chief Executive, Hospice New Zealand  
Genesis Oncology Trust: Breakfast lecture series

**Providing for the social, spiritual and medical needs of people in the end stage of life is known as palliative care.**

Because people are most comfortable in their own surroundings, every effort is made to provide support locally, either in a person's home, or in a hospice, rest home or hospital.

This geographical spread makes keeping up to speed with the latest developments in the area a challenge for the health professionals involved.

With the aid of five years of support from the Genesis Oncology Trust, Hospice New Zealand has met the challenge of communicating new ideas and practices through the Genesis Oncology Trust breakfast lecture series. This initiative takes place via videoconferences and offers a convenient and inexpensive way for professionals to increase their knowledge of palliative care issues. Lectures are delivered by experts in the field and the standard is such that the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners has approved the series as part of a continuing education programme for GPs. Nurses are also able to gain professional development hours to meet competency requirements.

Each annual series comprises of ten one-hour monthly lectures and around 270 health-care professionals from the Deep South to the Far North tune in. Topics range from social work issues through to management of specific medical conditions.



Mary Schumacher

Mary Schumacher, Hospice New Zealand Chief Executive says, "These lectures are invaluable to our palliative care community, as we are able to reach a large number of health-care professionals throughout New Zealand. It allows our people to keep up to date and is an important part of professional development. This is one of few opportunities available to present innovative programmes and research findings to a large audience and to showcase best practice. We are very grateful to the Genesis Oncology Trust for its support of this initiative."

## Save a tree!

You can now register to receive New Hope by email. Just go to [genesisenergy.co.nz](http://genesisenergy.co.nz) and click on 'Your Home', and then on 'Update My Details'.

Fill in your details (have your consumer number handy, which you'll find in the top right hand corner of your bill) and make sure you click on the button that says 'Yes, I'm happy to be sent promotional emails from Genesis Energy'.