

Media Release



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Researchers working to improve quality of life for head and neck cancer patients *Late surgeon's donation to the Alberta Cancer Foundation makes a difference*

EDMONTON — After life-saving surgery for head and neck cancer the physical alterations to a patient's skull or face can be devastating, but thanks to the legacy of an Edmonton surgeon, new research will help restore their quality of life.

In 2010, Dr. Murray Mickleborough, a renowned local maxillofacial surgeon, was diagnosed with cancer of the jaw, the very type he specialized in treating for decades. Before he passed away in 2011, he and his wife, Janice, made a \$1 million donation to the Alberta Cancer Foundation to help find ways to improve quality-of-life outcomes for patients facing head and neck cancer. His founding gift led to a unique partnership between the Institute for Reconstructive Sciences of Medicine, the University of Alberta, the Alberta Cancer Foundation, and the Caritas Hospitals Foundation.

The first two research projects funded by the Dr. Murray E. Mickleborough Interfacial Biomechanics Research Program have been announced and will receive a total of \$150,000 each for the next two years.

"This research has the potential to revolutionize the way we treat our patients and will radically change our understanding of how these treatments impact their lives," says Dr. Jana Rieger, Director of Research for the Institute for Reconstructive Sciences in Medicine.

The first, led by Dr. Martin Osswald, from the University of Alberta's Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry and Alberta Health Services prosthodontist, is a groundbreaking study that will help scientists generate a specific type of nasal cartilage that frequently needs to be removed following cancer treatment. Osswald and his team hope to grow this cartilage in the lab, using the patient's existing stem cells as well as special scaffolding that has been 3D printed for the occasion. In addition to saving patients another surgery, the tissue can be precisely customized ahead of time according to the individual patient's needs.

The second project, led by Dr. Hadi Seikaly, from the University of Alberta and Alberta Health Services, will allow doctors to better track the outcomes from various methods of treatment, giving patients the ability to choose between them with more certainty. Currently, there is a lack of data from which to make reliable predictions about a patient's outcome after treatment. This project looks at such studies as functional outcomes for patients who have had parts of their tongues removed as part of treatment for cancer.

"Murray was about making things happen, in his professional life and his personal life," says Ross Porter, Dr. Mickleborough's son in law. "We're really excited this is happening, and that there's an opportunity to make an impact in patients' lives through the research that Drs. Seikaly and Osswald will be undertaking."

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