

Position Profile

PhD Stipend in Paediatric Brain Tumour Research



WHO IS THE CHILDREN'S CANCER INSTITUTE?

The Children's Cancer Institute is the only independent medical research in Australia dedicated to research into the causes, prevention, better treatments and ultimately a cure for childhood cancer. More than 40 years on, our vision remains unchanged – to save the lives of all children with cancer and improve their long-term health, through research. The Institute has now grown to employ nearly 350 researchers, operational staff and students, and has established a national and international reputation for scientific excellence. Our focus is on translational research, whereby we have an integrated team of laboratory researchers and clinician scientists who work together in partnership to discover new treatments which can be progressed from the lab bench to the beds of children on wards in our hospitals as quickly as possible.

The Institute has recently embarked on a remarkable adventure towards joining with our clinical colleagues at the Kids Cancer Centre, Sydney Children's Hospital, in a brand-new purpose built home, Australia's first Children's Comprehensive Cancer Centre, which when completed, will house up to 900 child cancer clinicians and scientists.

OUR SHARED VISION

Our shared vision for the Children's Comprehensive Cancer Centre is to be the leading children's comprehensive cancer centre world-wide, providing for the seamless integration of child cancer research, clinical care and education, with the goal of putting an end to childhood cancer.

WE BELIEVE THAT

- No child should die from cancer or suffer life-long side effects from their treatment.
- Medical research is fundamental to curing childhood cancer.
- It is the critical iterative relationship between translational research, research that moves laboratory findings into the clinic; and discovery research, bench to bedside and back again, that is bringing us closer to one day curing childhood cancer.
- It's not if. It's when.

OUR PURPOSE

Children's Cancer Institute exists solely to put an end to the devastating impact of childhood cancer. Every week in Australia, three children and adolescents die of cancer. Only when that three becomes zero, and when all the survivors can live a normal life, will our work be done.

Our purpose as the only independent medical research institute in Australia focused exclusively on childhood cancer, is to Translate and Discover, through world class research, new treatments that will cure cancer and reduce side effects in children and adolescents.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Translate—Accelerate the integration of our translational research into clinical care, including delivery of the flagship Zero Childhood Cancer program.

Discover—To pursue world class discovery research, and to feed the translational pipeline through the depth, breadth and impact of our science.



OUR STRATEGIC ENABLERS

Empower—Attracting and developing the brightest minds in a vibrant collaborative high-performance culture that fosters diversity, innovation, and success.

Innovate—By providing our researchers and support teams with access to advanced technologies, infrastructure, and facilities, we will create a dynamic and cutting-edge environment for innovation.

Connect and engage—Partnering and collaborating with UNSW and Sydney Children's Hospitals Network together with national and international clinical and research leaders and organisations, governments, and industry to leverage and maximise the outputs and impact of our research.

Promote and fund—Sharing our beliefs, vision, and purpose with others to drive awareness, engagement and support for our cause that ensures we deliver our strategic objectives in a financially sustainable way.

YOUR ROLE

Role:	PhD Candidate	Team:	Brain Tumours Group
Job Family:		Reports To:	Dr Benjamin Rayner and Assoc. Prof. David Ziegler
Salary Band:	PhD Stipend \$40,000 p.a	Manages:	
Key Internal Relationships:		Key External Relationships:	

YOUR PURPOSE

Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Gliomas (DIPG) are the most aggressive and devastating of all childhood cancers. Due to their location in the brainstem the tumours cannot be surgically removed, do not respond to chemotherapy and are highly resistant to radiotherapy. Consequently, almost all children with DIPG die within one year of diagnosis, highlighting the desperate need for new and innovative treatment strategies for this devastating disease.

Epigenetic dysregulation is recognised as a driver of DIPG pathogenesis, with the majority of patients exhibiting the main responsible histone mutation (H3K27M). While >80% of DIPG have this key genomic driver, the precise mechanism by which this leads to DIPG development remains undefined.

We are seeking a PhD candidate to undertake an exciting project in the field of paediatric brain tumour research investigating the mechanism of action of inhibitors targeted at epigenetic processes that drive Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma (DIPG) tumorigenicity.

Funded through the NSW Health PhD Partnership Program, the PhD candidate will employ a range of in vitro techniques including DIPG neurosphere culture, cytotoxicity assays, qPCR, western blotting and mass spectrometry in order to determine drug mechanism of action. The in vivo effectiveness of treatment will be ascertained using established PDX mouse models of DIPG. Partnering with a pharmaceutical company as industry supervisor, the candidate will additionally be expected to complete the NSW Health Commercialisation Training Program during their candidature.

YOUR KEY OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Connection to the Cause	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You undertake other activities as directed to support the Institute's vision and purpose.
2. Systems & Processes	
3. People & Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You foster a harmonious and collaborative team culture and support the REDI vision – respect, equity, diversity, and inclusion. You maintain and enhance your skills and knowledge through participation in education and the Institute's Personal BEST performance and development program
4. Conduct & Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You demonstrate behaviours that positively reflect the Institute's Code of Conduct, Research Code of Conduct and all relevant WHS policies and procedures. You comply with all relevant Institute WHS policies and procedures. You take reasonable care to maintain your own health and safety and that of others. You actively participate in making the Institute a safe and healthy workplace through communication and consultation processes.

YOUR PROFILE

Skills/Qualifications/Experience	Capabilities
Essential: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The candidate must hold an undergraduate degree with at least a credit average (or equivalent). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated ability to work independently and as part of a larger team Demonstrated problem-solving ability

<p>Candidates must also have research experience through an Honours program (first class or second class, division one) or Master's degree by research in a relevant subject.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The candidate must be an Australian citizen or permanent resident. <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in cell culture techniques, particularly primary neurosphere culture. • Prior experience in qPCR, western blotting, mass spectrometry and mouse brain tumour models looked favourably upon, but full training in all techniques will be provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated scientific writing capabilities
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NOTE: It is not the intention of the Position Profile to limit the scope, outcome or activities of the position but to highlight the most important aspects of the position. The aspects mentioned above may be altered in accordance with the changing requirements of the role.