Breakthrough for leukaemia suffers

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A research team has found a way to ensure people suffering from leukaemia are not subjected to chemotherapy if it is unlikely to help them.

The research conducted by PhD student Sewa Rijal from the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (FMNHS), under the supervision of Professor Andrew Wei and Dean of FMNHS, Professor Christina Mitchell – was published in the prestigious journal *Blood*.

Ms Rijal studied the protein inositol polyphosphate 4-phosphatase II

(INPP4B) in patients diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia (AML). The results showed the protein identified whether patients would respond to chemotherapy or whether other, less toxic, treatments would be of more benefit.

"Once the patient is into the clinic, usually they're recommended for chemotherapy. But if we know that this patient expresses this protein, then we can avoid unnecessary toxicity that is associated with chemotherapy,"Ms Rijal told the ABC Radio's PM program last week.

"We can then take alternative therapy for this patient that may be more suitable.

"Currently, we're focusing on how it (the protein) acts in leukemic cells to cause chemoresistance. So if we can find out how it works, then we can target the protein and the pathway to then treat acute myeloid leukaemia more effectively."

Each year in Australia around 900 people are diagnosed with AML. It can occur at any age but is more common in adults over the age of 60 years.

Provided by Monash University