

CHANGING THE GLOBAL CLIMATE FOR EARLIER DETECTION OF CANCER

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It is well established that survival rates increase significantly for almost all patient groups if cancer is diagnosed and treated at an early stage, yet the field of early cancer detection (EDx) remains under developed and far from realising its full potential. Cancer Research UK has set early detection and diagnosis of cancer as a strategic priority and is working to drive progression of the field. In order to identify the best avenues to effect change we must also understand the challenges and develop strategies to overcome them. The EDx field is nascent, siloed and lacks visibility as a community. The discovery and translational pathways is a minefield of challenges which result in a high attrition rate. The challenges facing researchers are multifactorial, examples include: the challenges detecting signal relative to high background noise, especially in small sample volumes; poor validation of novel biomarkers and diagnostics due to lack of sample availability; insufficient funding; unclear and complex IP and regulatory hurdles; and limited interest from industry and pharma due to high-risk and low price point for diagnostics. Cancer Research UK has launched a number of initiatives to overcome the barriers facing EDx, this includes grant funding to stimulate and support EDx research, as well as community and capacity building activities. To advance the field and help draw in a diverse range of researchers, the grants can fund multidisciplinary, high-risk research, as well as international and industry collaboration. We offer support in licensing and IP, and we are working with a number of organisations to improve the implementation and adoption of novel EDx diagnostics. We are also launching the International Cancer Early Detection (ICED) Alliance, a virtual, trans-Atlantic EDx institute, which will attract the brightest minds to EDx and support collaborative research and infrastructure across the sites. We anticipate that these ventures will collectively expand capacity, cultivate a community, aid translation and result in earlier cancer detection.

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