

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### *Measuring the cost of brain surgery: a hefty price on all levels*

The quest to find a cure for brain cancer was given a further boost today when the Queensland Minister for Health, the Hon Stephen Robertson launched the not-for-profit BrizBrain & Spine Research Foundation in BrizBrain & Spine's new medical suites at the Wesley Hospital.

According to the Minister, more than 1400 new cases of malignant brain tumour are diagnosed nationally every year and with that number increasing annually, there has never been a greater need for an effective treatment and cure for brain cancer.

"As well as the enormous physical and emotional cost of brain tumours on those diagnosed, there is also a massive impact on the public and private health systems, with recovery typically requiring an average hospital stay of up to 12 days. That doesn't begin to account for the additional for the cost of diagnostics, post-operative therapies and pharmaceuticals," Mr Robertson said.

"The cost of brain surgery in the public health system can be more than \$34,000, depending on the type of operation. Clearly, any scientific advances that simplify surgery, reduce the recovery period and improve prognosis is going to be good news not only for patients, but also for the health system."

Launching the Research Foundation and the new rooms just prior to Brain Awareness Week, neurosurgeon, founding member of the BrizBrain & Spine team, and Executive Director of the BrizBrain & Spine Research Foundation, Dr David Walker, said the objectives of the Research Foundation closely align with those of the international awareness week.

"Brain Awareness Week is about promoting public awareness of brain disorders and the benefits of brain research. The BrizBrain & Spine Research Foundation was devised to facilitate further investigation and study into the treatment of and potential cure for brain and spinal conditions," Dr Walker said.

"While it is our intention that the BrizBrain & Spine Research Foundation will conduct studies across a range of brain and spine conditions, one of our first projects is a clinic trial of a drug that may inhibit the growth of certain types of brain tumour.

"We are already working with a young patient diagnosed with oligodendroglioma, a type of malignant tumour, who has volunteered to trial an anti-inflammatory drug for arthritis that has also been found to be effective in treating bowel polyps.

"While it is very early days in the trial, the results so far make us cautiously optimistic. Our patient's tumour hasn't grown in size and she has been able to minimise its manifestations such as seizures and blackouts." Clinical trials, post-operative assessments and ongoing patient liaison for support as well as information gathering all come with a hefty price tag.

Relying solely on donations and grants for funding, it is projected the BrizBrain & Spine Research Foundation will need more than \$300,000 a year to cover base operating costs, according to Dr Walker.

"That figure includes paying the wages of our Brain Tumour Support Nurse and research staff. It doesn't leave a lot of change for expensive studies or funding for future expansions," he said.

The Research Foundation's current projects are being funded privately by BrizBrain & Spine's doctors, but they hope donations to the Foundation will start to flow as awareness grows.

Any donations to the Foundation can be made online at [www.bbsresearch.com.au](http://www.bbsresearch.com.au). Similarly, to find out more about the Celebrex trial, or to register your interest as a participant, visit the BrizBrain & Spine Research site.

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