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Media Release

BREAKING PAIN BARRIERS – COMMUNICATING ISSUES IN CANCER PAIN

For patients with cancer, pain is a large scale problem.

Despite widely available effective pain management, there is evidence that cancer pain is undertreated.

The occurrence of pain has a unique impact on and meaning for each individual and the occurrence of cancer pain is in the context of a person's cultural, biological, social and spiritual background.

Assessing pain involves measuring the level of pain and determining the nature of the pain, but also exploring the 'deeper level of pain experience' in order to properly control pain and promote healing.

Australian Palliative Care Physician, Dr Melanie Lovell, will speak on the topic of communicating about issues in cancer pain at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the **Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists** (ANZCA) in Sydney this Saturday (May 3).

Dr Lovell says that there are a number of issues which may affect a patient's desire to communicate about pain and take pain relief. These include:

- Fear of opioids, especially the fear of becoming addicted to morphine
- Fears of tolerance
- Side effects
- Fear of injections
- Immune suppression
- Stoicism
- Not wanting to mask pain
- Not wanting to distract the doctor from curing the cancer
- Wanting to be a good patient
- Fatalism

In discussing the science and art of breaking the barriers to Cancer Pain Management, Dr Lovell says 'these barriers are very common and the health



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care team can work with each patient to understand his or her perspective and pain, and optimise the pain control'.

A booklet (*Overcoming Cancer Pain*) and DVD (*Managing Cancer Pain*) shown to help people with cancer manage pain are available from the NSW Cancer Council on 13 11 20.

ANZCA : *ANZCA is responsible for the education, training and specialist qualification of anaesthetists, intensive care specialists and pain medicine specialists in Australia and New Zealand. ANZCA also assists with training and education in Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong.*

Dr Melanie Lovell is available for interview on 0410 647 880

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