

## **SUNNYBROOK RESEARCHERS CONDUCT CRITICAL ORAL CANCER SURGICAL STUDY**

TORONTO (May 27, 2011) – Researchers at Sunnybrook are leading the Toronto arm of a Phase III cross-Canada clinical trial aimed to improve outcomes for individuals diagnosed with oral cancer. The Canadian Optically Guided Approach for Oral Lesions Surgical Trial (COOLS Study) has the potential to revolutionize oral cancer surgical practice in Canada and globally and is being conducted in nine sites and supported by a \$4.7 million grant from [The Terry Fox Research Institute](#) (TFRI).

Dr. Kevin Higgins is the surgical oncologist of the Head and Neck Cancer Care team at [Sunnybrook's Odette Cancer Centre](#) who is leading the Toronto trial: "Cancers of the oral cavity have few natural barriers to spread and because of the abundance of blood and lymphatic vessels can progress rapidly. The more disease we detect in its earliest stages, the more effective treatment is to reduce recurrence and ultimately disease progression, and overall survival."

Dr. Higgins and other participating surgeons are using fluorescence visualization (FV) or blue light. Under blue light, healthy tissue generates a fluorescence that is markedly different from tissue with abnormalities or pre-cancerous tissue. The researchers aim to spare healthy tissue, better detect and remove pre-cancerous tissue to reduce recurrence with the potential to improve quality of life for individuals with early-stage oral cancer.

"This study will have an immediate impact on practice if the study turns out the way we hope," says TFRI COOLS Study principal investigator Dr. Miriam Rosin, a senior scientist with the BC Cancer Agency.

Says Dr. Victor Ling, TFRI President and Scientific Director, "Our investment in this promising study is our response to a serious clinical concern expressed by head and neck surgeons across Canada and it has the potential to change surgical practices for cancer of the mouth nationally and internationally. We look forward to a study that will provide the evidence for surgical practice that this approach will greatly reduce recurrence among these patients."

Oral cancers are a subtype of head and neck cancers and include tongue and tonsil cancers. An estimated 3,400 Canadians were diagnosed with oral cancer, and an estimated 1,150 Canadians died of the disease in 2010.

For more about the clinical trial to discuss possibilities with your physician, please visit: <http://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT01039298>