

# Media Release



Tuesday, 13 February 2018

## Pre-term babies could benefit from study of Melbourne mums

Melbourne researchers are to begin a major study that could result in a test to accurately predict if women will experience pre-term labour during their pregnancy.

Such a laboratory or bed-side product would enable clinicians to offer suitable, potentially life-saving care to mothers and babies.

The three-year trial study involving more than 3000 women at the Royal Women's Hospital and the Mercy Hospital for Women will go ahead thanks to a commercial agreement between the University of Melbourne and Carmentix Australia Pty Ltd.

Mercy Hospital for Women and University of Melbourne researcher and obstetrician Dr Megan Di Quinzio said: "The vast majority of women are healthy and have no identified risk factors, but up to 10 per cent can experience labour at a pre-term gestation without warning.

"To reliably know of likely pre-term labour beforehand would offer so much hope because even predicting or delaying labour by a few days or weeks and thereby allowing adequate time to prepare the baby for life outside the womb can make a huge difference."

Women planning to give birth at either the Royal Women's Hospital or the Mercy Hospital for Women in Melbourne, are invited to take part in the Predicting Preterm Labour study - or PPeTaL. Swabs from participants will be analysed for protein "biomarkers" to check how closely those biomarkers are associated with impending labour.

"Participation in this study could ultimately save babies' lives in the future," Dr Di Quinzio said.

Carmentix chief executive Dr Nir Arbel said: "We are excited about entering into a deeper, long term collaboration with the University of Melbourne. Our previous study demonstrated, for the first time, that we may accurately predict pre-term birth months before any symptoms arise. We now see our goal of saving lives and our path to achieving it is clear."

Royal Women's Hospital and University of Melbourne senior research fellow Dr Harry Georgiou said bringing a pre-term labour test to market would revolutionise maternity care.

"Every year about 15 million babies worldwide are born pre-term and more than 1 million will die, mostly in developing countries. A reliable predictive test could make a big difference for many pre-term babies in both the short and longer term."

The University of Melbourne-Carmentix collaboration has already identified biomarkers associated with labour. The new agreement, announced today, will zero in on the most promising of those biomarkers to determine their predictive utility.

**Media enquiries: Kathryn Powley | 0428 734 902 | [Kathryn.powley@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:Kathryn.powley@unimelb.edu.au)**



# PURSUIT

WORLD-CHANGING RESEARCH MADE POSSIBLE BY MELBOURNE