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New Proteomics blood test unlocks better oesophageal cancer detection

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Newly published results from ASX-listed diagnostics trailblazer Proteomics International Laboratories have unveiled stunning new clinical findings for its simple PromarkerEso oesophageal cancer blood test, opening the way for the innovative blood test to be commercially released.

The test's accuracy was demonstrated in a 259-person study across three patient groups in Australia and the United States. The results were posted overnight in the peer-reviewed journal *Proteomes*, providing a major academic rubber stamp for the technology.



Newly published results from Proteomics International have revealed its PromarkerEso blood test can detect early oesophageal cancer with 91 per cent accuracy.

The new findings showed that the test could detect a whopping 91.4 out of 100 patients with the heartburn-related cancer and correctly identify 98.9 per cent of people without it,

offering a powerful, non-invasive alternative to costly and uncomfortable endoscopies.

Based on the results, PromarkerEso outperforms many tests currently used for screening other types of cancers. For context, the widely used Prostate-Specific Antigen blood test used to diagnose prostate cancer has an Area Under Curve (AUC) measurement of just 0.68, while PromarkerEso hit an exceptional AUC of 0.98. An AUC greater than 0.7 is considered to offer acceptable discrimination, while above 0.9 is considered outstanding.

‘The published results represent a major advancement in our mission to transform the lives of people living with chronic acid reflux.’

Proteomics International Laboratories managing director Dr Richard Lipscombe

Described by the company as a landmark moment in non-invasive diagnostics, PromarkerEso uses a standard blood draw to flag at-risk patients using a traffic light system that grades patients at low, moderate and high risk of developing the cancer. The results are delivered with near-laboratory precision and without the need for specialist procedures.

Proteomics says the breakthrough could transform early detection of one of the world’s deadliest and most overlooked cancers, which often goes undiagnosed until it’s too late.

Specifically, the disease targeted by the test is oesophageal adenocarcinoma, which is often caused by chronic heartburn, or acid reflux, and affects up to 20 per cent of people in Western populations.

Despite the high incidence, current detection methods rely on invasive endoscopy procedures that are uncomfortable and expensive. In the US, an endoscopy costs about US\$2750 (A\$4200) per procedure. Even with this rigorous scrutiny, up to 90 per cent of cases go undetected.

Proteomics says this situation means early diagnosis is critical. Oesophageal cancer ranks seventh in cancer-related deaths globally and survival rates are grim.

Oesophageal adenocarcinoma diagnoses have surged sixfold globally in the past 40 years, making the disease one of the leading causes of cancer deaths. Less than 20 per cent of those living with the disease survive five years.

PromarkerEso has been developed using a patented blend of four blood-based glycoproteins – which act like a protein fingerprint in blood - coupled with a patient's age and body mass index. At-risk patients can then be flagged for further endoscopic testing.

Proteomics International Laboratories managing director Dr Richard Lipscombe said: *“The published results represent a major advancement in our mission to transform the lives of people living with chronic acid reflux. PromarkerEso has the potential to revolutionise how doctors manage the risk of oesophageal cancer - offering a standard blood test that could reduce reliance on invasive procedures and improve early detection rates.”*

PromarkerEso's Australian commercial rollout is now underway and its international expansion will shortly follow. To improve its market reach, Proteomics will be able to plug the test directly into its existing direct-to-consumer and GP-targeted pathways, which the company has already built for its other Promarker diagnostics.

To help with the company's ongoing trials and provide some firepower to its marketing campaigns, Proteomics also announced a successful \$12 million capital raising today with the issue of 32.5 million new shares at 37 cents each with half an attached option.

Industry experts have backed up the breakthrough, calling the test a potential game-changer. Professor Hugh Barr, a world-leading United Kingdom-based oesophageal surgeon, said PromarkerEso's early detection capability will ensure curative treatment for the disease.

Professor Barr is part of an expert team of seven key clinical leaders on Proteomics' new clinical advisory board, who were recruited to help the company crack a massive global market, including in North America.

With patents granted across Australia, China and Europe, and further applications pending, Proteomics appears to have locked in both a health win and a major commercial opportunity.

The test's scalability and strong profit margins make it an attractive prospect for global healthcare providers as a world-first, clinically validated test addressing a multi-billion-dollar market with a huge unmet medical need.

One drop of blood might save a life - and help launch a diagnostic empire.

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