

The good doctor

By Kim O'Connor

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Back in the mid-1970s, Michael Friedlander decided to investigate the relatively new area of medical oncology as a career choice. He stayed with it, and now as Professor Friedlander, director of the department of medical oncology at The Prince of Wales Hospital, he is to receive an award from his peers this week for an outstanding contribution to the control of cancer in Australia.

The Medical Oncology Group of Australia-Novartis Oncology Cancer Achievement Award has been presented since 1999 to a scientist, clinician or healthcare professional.

When informed of his selection, the Rose Bay local said he was "very surprised."

"I was quite taken aback. Generally, when you think about it, most of us do not think we are doing anything more than a job," he said. Apart from being director of the medical oncology department, he is also the Professor of Medicine at the nearby University of NSW. As well, he runs a full-time practice, is involved with cancer research and publication, and the quest for ensuring cancer patients have the best possible treatment options.



Controlling cancer: Professor Michael Friedlander of The Prince of Wales Hospital.

Photo: Alan Place

"One of my main interests is gynecological cancer and I'm the chairman of the Australia & New Zealand Gynecological Oncology Group. "Through this we have had collaboration with research trial groups all around the world, allowing women in Australia access to trials that they would not have had access to previously," he said.

The establishment of the first family cancer clinic in the early '90s is another landmark in his career. "It's for people with a family history of cancer," he said. "We know a lot more about the genetic causes of cancer and we can identify the risks for them and inform them about ways of lowering the risks."

Professor M Friedlander is also Patron of Life Force Cancer Foundation. This is a non-profit organisation, providing emotional/psycho social support for people dealing with the experience of cancer, through a range of support programs and therapies including groupwork and meditation, counselling, special workshops and retreats. Support groups are held weekly in Sydney's metropolitan area. More information can be found at their website;

www.lifeforce.org.au