Can you begin with a brief description of Major Centre status and what this new role means for the three centres?

We’ll make significant new investments in the Cancer Research UK Major Centres to accelerate progress in cancer research. We already fund a network of 15 Cancer Research UK Centres in the UK and the three new Major Centres will act as vital research hubs for this network by drawing together expertise, encouraging collaborative research, and bridging the gap between innovative laboratory work and treatments that benefit patients. We’ve announced three Major Centres so far, but hope to establish more in the future.

How were the centres selected?

Centres had to apply to become Major Centre locations, showing how they could boost cancer research if they were given the additional funding. The three Major Centres were chosen because they offered the biggest and best opportunities to advance cancer research, and showed how they could combine innovative laboratory research with cutting-edge experimental medicine.

What will be the uses of the extra funding allocated to the Centres?

The funding will be used for different types of research at each Major Centre. For example, a portion will be used to set up new technology for immunotherapies and biomarkers, some will help to set up groundbreaking new areas of research and some will allow us to train junior researchers to help them become research leaders of the future.

How will the development of these Major Centres accelerate national and international collaborations?

The Cancer Research UK Major Centres will bring together our network of centres to boost national collaborations to help deliver Cancer Research UK’s ambitious research strategy. The Centres will drive multidisciplinary collaboration both within biomedical research and with other disciplines.

Looking ahead, what will be the key benefits of more personalised treatments for patients?

One of the key benefits of personalised medicine is that it could be more effective because it is tailored to the patient’s cancer. The Major Centres work will include laboratory science to find out more about cancer itself, and clinical research to help develop and test personalised medicines.

What do you see as the key challenges facing cancer research?

There are many challenges facing cancer research, which is why it’s so important that we continue our work against the disease. We hope that the Major Centres’ work will help tackle these challenges, which include: increasing our knowledge of cancer biology, finding new tests to detect cancers, boosting the number of people diagnosed at an early stage when treatment is more likely to be successful, understanding the causes of cancer and whether there are ways to lower peoples’ risk of developing the disease, and ensuring that we develop new effective treatments with fewer side effects.