Super-computer to work on cancer

WASHINGTON, USA: IBM is putting its Watson super-computer to work fighting cancer, in what is described as the first commercial computer program of its kind to use "big data" to help patients with the disease.

The US computing giant last week unveiled its initiative with health insurer WellPoint and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Centre in New York.

The super-computer, which gained fame by defeating two human champions in the *Jeopardy!* quiz show, has been sifting through some 600,000 pieces of medical evidence, two million pages of text from 42 medical journals and clinical trials in oncology research.

"This can speed up the way data is analysed to make the best diagnosis and find the optimal treatment," says Craig Thompson, Sloan-Kettering's president.

"It can take years for the latest developments in oncology to reach all practice settings," Thompson said.

"The combination of transformational technologies found in Watson with our cancer analytics and decision-making process has the potential to revolutionise the accessibility of information for the treatment of cancer in communities across the country and around the world."

IBM first announced plans to work with WellPoint in 2011 and last year began receiving data from the New York research hospital which specialises in cancer.

The first application will work with 1,500 lung cancer cases, where clinicians and analysts are training Watson to extract and interpret physician notes, lab results and clinical research.

The Maine Centre for Cancer Medicine and Westmed Medical Group will be two centres testing the service and providing feedback to WellPoint, IBM and Memorial Sloan-Kettering.

"IBM's work with WellPoint and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center represents a landmark collaboration in how technology and evidence based medicine can transform the way in which health care is practiced," said Manoj Saxena at

IBM.

"These breakthrough capabilities bring forward the first in a series of Watson-based technologies, which exemplifies the value of applying big data and analytics and cognitive computing to tackle the industry's most pressing challenges," Saxena

The program is being commercialised under the name *Interactive Care Insights for Oncology*, powered by Watson.

The Watson super-computer was named after IBM founder Thomas Watson. It can take in tens of million pages of data in just seconds.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge