

NHMRC ENABLING GRANTS ROUND 2 – CLINICAL TRIALS INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT

Enabling grants assist Australian researchers to undertake high quality, world-class research by providing support for specific facilities and/or activities that will enhance the national health and medical research effort. Enabling grants are subject to the principles of excellence, an open and competitive application process, time-limited support and the potential for self-sustainability over the longer term.

This second round of the Enabling Grants funding scheme focused on providing Clinical Trials Resources which will increase support for clinical trials, enhance capacity to undertake trials in a greater range of health areas and increase the number of trials being undertaken in Australia. The outcomes of this round of Enabling Grants should be an enhancement of Australia's ability to conduct clinical trials, increased numbers of clinical trials and greater numbers of participants in clinical trials.

The second round of Enabling Grants was advertised in July 2004 resulting in 49 expressions of interest being submitted. After assessment by the Enabling Grants panel, 19 applicants were invited to submit a full application.

After a full peer review, including external assessment, eight applications are recommended for funding

Details of Recommended Enabling Grants for Funding to Commence in July 2005

New South Wales

Title of Project – Australian Sleep Health Clinical Trials Network

Chief Investigator – Assoc Professor Ronald Grunstein

Institute – Woolcock Institute of Medical Research, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital

Funding - \$1,040,000 over five years

Description of Project – **ID 343020** - There is increased recognition that sleep health problems are a major cause of illness in the community. These include disorders such as obstructive sleep apnoea, insomnia, restless legs syndrome and health problems related to shift work. It is proposed to form a consolidated network of sleep investigation groups to undertake larger scale clinical trials aimed at deciding what are the best treatments for different sleep disorders. The enabling grant will provide resources that will make Australian involvement in international studies more competitive and achieve higher publication quality for the research work.

Title of Project – Protocol Development, web-based data collection and data quality for all Cancer Cooperative Trials Groups.

Chief Investigator – Professor Stephen Ackland

Institute - University of Newcastle

Funding - \$1,840,000 over five years

Description of Project – **ID 351218** - Each year, 85,000 Australian develop cancer and 35,000 die of it. The Clinical Oncological Society of Australia and nine Australian cancer trials groups run studies that test new and better ways of preventing, curing, treating and palliating people affected by cancer. This grant will help these groups start trials faster; run them more efficiently; coordinate quality assurance; and standardize operating procedures. This grant will enable collaboration that increases the speed, efficiency and quality of cancer research to lessen the suffering of people affected by cancer.

Title of Project – Trans Tasman Radiation Oncology Group

Chief Investigator – Assoc Prof David Ball

Institute – University of Newcastle

Funding - \$1,390,000 over five years

Description of Project – **ID 351217** - The Trans Tasman Radiation Oncology Group is an experienced research group conducting cancer clinical trials involving radiotherapy (RT) in order to improve cure rates, quality of life and to reduce side-effects of treatment. Fifty per cent of all cancer patients need RT as part of their treatment. The aim of the proposal is to strengthen the quality and safety of RT trials by (a) enabling rapid review and checking of treatment by electronic means and (b) improve trial design.

Title of Project – National Resource for public good, web-based, investigator-initiated trials.

Chief Investigator – Professor John Simes

Institute – University of Sydney

Funding - \$1,290,000 over five years

Description of Project – **ID 358410** - The facility will provide resources in clinical trials expertise and web-based trials systems to enable investigator-initiated clinical trials of public good. This should ensure that the highest quality of clinical trials research can be undertaken by clinical trials researchers in new and priority health research areas, at any institution throughout Australia. Areas supported through this national resource will include controlled trials of current clinical practice, surgery, new health technologies, palliative and supportive care and complementary medicine.

South Australia

Title of Project – Interdisciplinary Maternal Perinatal Action on Clinical Trials Collaboration.

Chief Investigator – Professor Caroline Crowther

Institute – University of Adelaide

Funding - \$1,040,000 over five years

Description of Project – **ID 349570** - The aims of the Interdisciplinary Maternal Perinatal Action on Clinical Trials (IMPACT) Collaboration is to promote and support high quality clinical trials addressing important research questions to improve the health and well being of women and their children. These aims will be achieved by implementing the three objectives of the Collaboration being:

- Provision of high level support to researchers at a national and regional level;
- Provision of ongoing education and training; and
- Identification of national priority research areas and encouraging methodological trials.

Queensland

Title of Project – Australasian Kidney Trials Network

Chief Investigator – Assoc Professor Carmel Hawley

Institute – University of Queensland

Funding - \$1,290,000 over five years

Description of Project – **ID 338800** - The Australasian Kidney Trials Network will facilitate well-conducted clinical research and foster collaboration between leading researchers in kidney disease. The Network's focus will be to answer important questions about prevention and treatment of kidney disease to improve health and quality of life outcomes. The Network will be at the forefront of knowledge creation and address complex economic, technological and social needs relating to the patient care and the translation of research into clinical practice.

Victoria

Title of Project – National Centre for Intensive Care Research

Chief Investigator – Professor Rinaldo Bellomo

Institute – Australia and New Zealand Intensive Care Society

Funding - \$1,290,000 over five years

Description of Project – ID 316001 - The Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society Clinical Trials Group (ANZICS CTG) provides the only coordinated clinical trials research strategy for intensive care medicine in Australia and one of the few in the world. Its core business is the design and conduct of world-class multicentre randomised controlled trials. To date the group has operated with extremely modest infrastructure support supplied by the parent society (ANZICS) and its success has been due to the voluntary hard work and commitment of full-time clinicians. These efforts have already significantly enhanced the medical research effort in Australia by documenting the epidemiology of important areas of critical illness and, more importantly, by the conduct of world-class clinical trials. The recently published SAFE study is the largest clinical trial conducted in the intensive care population and has been recognised as a “landmark trial and a milestone for the specialty of critical care medicine.” It is noteworthy also that other craft groups in Australia (for example – renal medicine) are seeking to imitate the structure and activities of the ANZICS CTG. It is clear however, that a national methods centre providing dedicated epidemiology, database and statistical expertise, together with improved infrastructure to support large clinical trials, would ensure the future of the group and enable greater productivity.

Title of Project – Infrastructure support for the Australasian Leukaemia and Lymphoma Group Trial Centre

Chief Investigator – Dr Max Wolf

Institute – Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute

Funding - \$790,000 over five years

Description of Project – ID 337911 - Lymphoma, leukaemia and related cancers of the blood affect thousands of Australians, including children. The Australasian Leukaemia and Lymphoma Group, a network of clinical and laboratory haematologists, will integrate laboratory research to discover new approaches to treatment, with clinical trials to test the safety and effectiveness of the new treatments. This approach should accelerate the research and maximise patient and community benefits.