



MEDIA RELEASE

NHMRC RECOGNISES AUSTRALIA'S BEST AND BRIGHTEST RESEARCHERS

Thursday 11 December 2008

Seven of Australia's most distinguished health and medical researchers were recognised last night for their outstanding contribution to the success of research in this country.

The National Health and Medical Research Council, Australia's leading funding body for health and medical research, granted its Excellence Awards to the highest ranked recipients of grants and fellowships in 2008. Recipients were assessed by a group of experts, through a comprehensive peer review process.

Professor Michael Good, Chair of the NHMRC presented the awards at an invitation-only dinner in Canberra on Wednesday evening.

The award recipients are:

- Professor Joseph Trapani, Deputy Director of the Research Division of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre Melbourne, was among the first to discover the toxic molecules associated with the immune system's so-called "killer cells". He and his team have since devised new ways of activating the killer cells as novel therapies for cancer, and they have invented new drugs to block certain other killer cells that can cause life-threatening auto-immune diseases
- Professor Melissa Wake, a paediatrician at the Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, focuses on finding sustainable clinical solutions for common child health problems that can be applied to reduce the future health care burden.
- Professor Pankaj Sah is a neurobiologist and Deputy Director of the Queensland Brain Institute at the University of Queensland. His laboratory uses electrophysiology, imaging and molecular techniques to study the way the brain's amygdala lays down emotional memory. Disorders of this region lead to diseases such as anxiety and post-traumatic stress.
- Professor Graeme Jackson, a neurologist and Director and Founder of Melbourne's Brain Research Institute (now part of the Florey Neuroscience Institutes) is recognised for his work in defining the causes of epilepsy and for classifying the brain's developmental abnormalities using MRI – Magnetic Resonance Imaging.

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- Professor Helena Teede, an endocrinologist and Director of Research at The Jean Hailes Foundation for Women's Health, focuses on hormonal-metabolic interactions in the national health priority areas of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease, as well as translating new models of prevention and management for chronic disease for use in the community.
- Dr Sof Andrikopoulos is head of the Islet Biology Research Group at the University of Melbourne Department of Medicine, Austin Health, which is investigating the genetic susceptibility of islet dysfunction in diabetes. His research has led to the hypothesis that increased insulin secretory demand may be a mechanism that contributes to diabetes, a theory that has clinical implications in the treatment of type 2 diabetes.
- Professor Stephen MacMahon, Principal Director of The George Institute for International Health and Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine and Epidemiology at the University of Sydney, was founder and chief investigator of a number of pivotal studies into the causes, prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases. His research has led to the publication of approximately 300 papers.

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