



Friday 6 February 2008

## MEDIA RELEASE

### NSW WINS \$39.6 MILLION IN TOP MEDICAL RESEARCH GRANTS

Five leading health and medical research teams in NSW will share more than \$39.6 million in some of the Australian Government's most highly sought-after research grants.

The NSW funds are part of more than \$108 million in National Health and Medical Research Council 2010 Program Grants awarded to research teams across the country.

The five-year grants are sought after because they enable research teams to pursue the best research options in their field, knowing they have the time, funds and flexibility to respond to unexpected findings and opportunities.

Echoing NHMRC's slogan, 'working to build a healthy Australia', the grants reinforce the Australian Government's election health commitments of *Keeping People Well – Focus on Prevention, Closing the Gap on Indigenous Health, Fighting Cancer – Australia's Biggest Killer* and *Ageing – Meeting Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

The NSW 2010 Program Grant recipients are:

- Professor Richard Bryant at the University of NSW, who will receive \$7.1m. His team will look at enhancing the nation's capacity in reducing psychological problems after trauma, ensuring that Australia retains its leading edge in post-traumatic research.
- Professor John Kaldor at the University of NSW, who will receive \$9.1m. His team will aim to discover new information about how to prevent and manage sexually transmitted infections.
- Professor Perminder Sachdev at the University of NSW, who will receive \$6.1m. His team will carry out long-term studies of ageing people to develop new methods of diagnosing dementia before symptoms become prominent.
- Professor Mathew Vadas at the University of Sydney will receive \$8.0m. to bring together a team of researchers with scientific and clinical expertise to explore inflammation and cancer at the cellular and molecular level.

WORKING TO BUILD A HEALTHY AUSTRALIA

[www.nhmrc.gov.au](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au)

GPO Box 1421, Canberra ACT 2601

Level 5, 20 Allara Street, Canberra City ACT

T. 13 000 NHMRC (13 000 64672) or +61 2 6217 9000 F. +61 2 6217 9100 E. [nhmrc@nhmrc.gov.au](mailto:nhmrc@nhmrc.gov.au)

ABN 88 601 010 284

- Professor Robert Graham at the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, who will receive \$9.4m. His team will study defects in the development, repair and/or function of heart muscle cells. These defects are related to adult-onset heart disease, a leading cause of death and disability in Australia.

The NHMRC funding is an essential part of the Australian Government's plans to bolster health and medical research to improve the wellbeing of all Australians.

The importance of the grants was emphasised by the Prime Minister's advance naming of one recipient, Professor Angel Lopez of the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science in Adelaide, as part of a major announcement on cancer research in January 2009.

All the grants were awarded through an open competitive process carried out according to the NHMRC Act, subjected to rigorous peer review and approved by NHMRC's Research Committee and Council.

More information on the grants can be found at NHMRC's website, [www.nhmrc.gov.au](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au).

*Details of the successful NSW projects are attached.*

**Media contacts: Carolyn Norrie, NHMRC, 0422 008 512**

## **NHMRC 2010 Program Grant recipients in NSW**

### **Professor Richard Bryant, University of New South Wales, \$7.06m**

Post-traumatic Mental Health: Advancing Understanding of Diagnosis, Treatment and Mechanisms

Psychological disorders following exposure to trauma account for a significant proportion of the burden of disease in terms of personal suffering, decreased productivity, occupational dysfunction and demands on health services. This project will enhance the nation's capacity to reduce psychological problems after trauma. It will consolidate a critical mass of Australia's leading trauma researchers, ensuring that Australia retains its leading edge in post-traumatic research.

### **Professor John Kaldor, University of New South Wales, \$9.1m**

Sexually Transmitted Infections: Causes, Consequences and Interventions

Sexually transmitted infections are important causes of serious illness and death in Australia and overseas, with high or rising rates of treatable or preventable diseases in a number of populations. Particularly affected in Australia are young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and homosexual men. We will bring together a new team of researchers to discover new information about how to prevent and manage these infections.

### **Professor Perminder Sachdev, University of New South Wales, \$6.09m**

Prevention, Early Detection and Effective Management of Neurocognitive Disorders in the Elderly

The Program comprises a number of longitudinal studies of ageing individuals to develop methods of diagnosing dementia before symptoms become prominent. We are also examining factors that increase the risk of developing dementia. We wish to translate this research into early and better diagnosis, and the development of new treatments and strategies for dementia care. We expect that this research will make a major impact on health policy in Australia for cognitive disorders in the elderly.

### **Professor Mathew Vadas, University of Sydney, \$8.02m**

Inflammation, Angiogenesis and Cancer

Inflammation and cancer are at the heart of many human diseases. This particularly applies to the major global problem of liver fibrosis and liver cancer affecting almost half a billion of the world's population. This Program brings together researchers with expertise in basic science and the clinic, with the aim of exploring these issues at the cellular and molecular level. The synergistic and combinatorial use of basic and clinical skills gives a high likelihood of discoveries leading to new therapies.

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**Professor Robert Graham, Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, \$9.35m**  
Molecular Mechanisms of Cardiac Function and Disease

Adult-onset heart disease remains the leading cause of death and disability in our society, with almost two million Australians affected. Furthermore, structural heart malformations are the most common type of abnormality at birth and the leading cause of deaths in infants dying from non-infectious causes. Many of these problems are due to defects in the development, repair and/or function of heart muscle cells or cardiomyocytes. Thus, we propose to understand, in fine detail, cardiomyocyte as well as integrated heart development, biology, physiology and function as a prerequisite for the development of major advances in the prevention and treatment of these disorders.

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