



MEDIA RELEASE

QUEENSLAND WINS \$22.5 MILLION IN TOP MEDICAL RESEARCH GRANTS

Date: Sunday 1 February, 2009

Four leading health and medical research teams in Queensland will share more than \$25.2 million in some of the Australian Government's most highly sought-after research grants.

The Queensland 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 21st Century*.

The Queensland 2010 Program Grant recipients are:

- Professor Derek Hart at the Mater Medical Research Institute Ltd, who will receive \$3.4m. His team will study the specialised white cells that initiate immune responses, leading to improving the survival of patients with leukemia, lymphoma and multiple myeloma.
- Professor Neville Owen at the University of Queensland, who will receive \$5.4m. His team will measure sitting time and physical activity in people's daily lives, especially ageing 'baby boomers', in order to reduce inactivity diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer and depression.
- Associate Professor Richard Lewis at the University of Queensland, who will receive \$6.4m. His team will research peptides derived from venomous invertebrates, leading to improved treatments for pain, especially persistent pain.
- Professor Ranjeny Thomas of the University of Queensland, who will receive \$10.3m. Her team, which includes former Australian of the Year Ian Frazer, will investigate the role of the immune system in

WORKING TO BUILD A HEALTHY AUSTRALIA

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cancers, chronic viral infections and autoimmune diseases, and develop novel vaccines to treat these infections and diseases.

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.

Details of the successful Queensland projects are attached.

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NHMRC 2010 Program Grant recipients in Queensland

Professor Derek Hart, Mater Medical Research Institute Ltd, \$3.36m

The Translation of Dendritic Cell Biology into Clinical Practice

This Program combines world recognised expertise in the science of immunology and the blood system, with top Australian expertise in the practice of bone marrow transplantation and the treatment of hematological malignancies. Its vision is to study the biology of dendritic cells, which are the specialised white cells that initiate the immune response, and then to apply this knowledge to the design and introduction of novel diagnostic and therapeutic immune strategies, to improve the survival of patients with leukemia, lymphoma and multiple myeloma.

Professor Neville Owen, University of Queensland, \$5.39m

Sitting Less and Moving More: Population Health Research to Understand and Influence Sedentary Behaviour

The majority of Australian adults spend most of their waking hours sitting: at home, at work and in their cars; most do not participate in exercise or sport. This leads to weight gain and to diseases of inactivity (particularly diabetes, heart disease, cancer and depression). New research will measure sitting time and the physical activity in people's daily lives, what factors encourage inactivity, and how to increase activity levels, especially among the ageing 'baby boomer' population.

Associate Professor Richard Lewis, University of Queensland, \$6.36m

Venom Peptide Modulators of Pain Pathways

The goal of the proposed Program is to improve treatments for pain, especially persistent pain, which remains a poorly managed global health burden. Our pre-eminent team integrates a unique set of complementary research skills in using peptides derived from venomous invertebrates to dissect the pharmacology of pain pathways in persistent pain states, and develop these novel peptides to the point where they can be considered for pre-clinical development in collaboration with commercial partners.

Professor Ranjeny Thomas, University of Queensland, \$10.13m

Immunological Therapies for Cancer, Chronic Infection and Autoimmunity

The team comprises five leading scientists with a history of successful investigation into the role of the immune system in cancers, chronic viral infections and autoimmune diseases. There is a large unmet need for effective solutions with fewer side effects in these diseases, which cause a high disease burden in our society. In this program, we particularly seek to develop novel vaccines for chronic infections and autoimmune diseases and to improve the safety of bone marrow transplantation.

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