



NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CLINICAL STUDIES  
[www.nhmrc.gov.au/nics](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/nics)

## MEDIA RELEASE

3<sup>rd</sup> April 2007  
For immediate release

### Filling gaps in stroke care: Sydney occupational therapist awarded prestigious national Fellowship

Increasing outdoor journeys and the community participation of people with stroke is the goal of Dr Annie McCluskey, a senior lecturer in occupational therapy in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Sydney, who has just received a Fellowship from the National Institute of Clinical Studies (NICS), co-sponsored by the HCF (The Hospitals Contribution Fund of Australia) Health and Medical Research Foundation.

Dr McCluskey will use the NICS-HCF Foundation Fellowship to undertake a two-year implementation project that aims to encourage and help people who have had a stroke to get out and about after returning home from hospital. She will undertake this project at the Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital in south western Sydney.

Stroke affects over 345,000 Australians, is one of the leading causes of disability, and the second highest cause of death in adults. Over 48,000 strokes occur each year in Australia, with around one third of survivors experiencing an ongoing disability that limits their participation in home and community life.

There is evidence that the combination of written information, advice and an average of five targeted occupational therapy sessions can significantly increase the number of outdoor trips per month for people with stroke, and that these results are sustainable ten months after the intervention.

“Without help, these people can experience social isolation and associated mood disorders that impact on their quality of life,” said Dr McCluskey. “The National Stroke Foundation has developed guidelines which recommend a series of targeted home and community visits as the most effective intervention to get people out of their homes as often as they wish, but this is not being routinely provided.”

“I aim to help local occupational therapists implement the guideline recommendation by identifying current practice and working with them to overcome barriers to best practice.” she said.

“NICS is the part of the National Health and Medical Research Council responsible for closing gaps in health care and is delighted to award this Fellowship to Dr McCluskey. We are very grateful to the HCF Health and Medical Research Foundation for their generous support.” said Dr Heather Buchan, NICS Director. “This work will make an important contribution to improving the health and quality of life for people recovering from stroke and wanting to get out and about in their community.”

Dr McCluskey will join six other health professionals from Victoria, the Northern Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia in the NICS Fellowship program for 2007. For more information about the NICS Fellowship Program: [www.nhmrc.gov.au/nics](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/nics)

Release ends.

Media contact: Meredith Cameron T: 03-88660409 M:0409383152 [mcameron@nicssl.com.au](mailto:mcameron@nicssl.com.au)

### **Note to editors**

**The National Institute of Clinical Studies (NICS)**, [www.nhmrc.gov.au/nics](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/nics), is an institute of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australia's peak body for supporting health and medical research. As part of the NHMRC, NICS works to improve health care by getting health and medical research into practice.

The NICS Fellowship program was launched in 2003 and supports health professionals to undertake practical projects that aim to improve health outcomes for people by getting high quality evidence into everyday clinical practice in particular health settings.

The two-year, part-time Fellowships are open to early- to mid-career health professionals across the health care spectrum, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, paramedics, health care managers, and policy makers.

The Fellowships provide an annual stipend as well as professional development opportunities, training programs in evidence implementation, mentorship, and opportunities to network with and learn from world-class experts who come to Australia as part of NICS' Visiting Experts program.

Applications for NICS Fellowships 2008 open at the end of April 2007.

**The HCF (Hospitals Contribution Fund) Health and Medical Research Foundation** is a charitable trust established by the Hospitals Contribution Fund of Australia [HCF] to encourage medical research and research and enquiry into the provision, administration and delivery of health services in Australia.

For more information: [www.hcf.com.au](http://www.hcf.com.au)