

## MEDIA RELEASE

Dated 28 March 2007

For immediate release



TURNING EVIDENCE INTO ACTION

## NICS ANNOUNCES SIX NEW LEADERS IN AUSTRALIAN HEALTH CARE

The National Institute of Clinical Studies (NICS) has today announced the award of six 2007 NICS Fellowships to help improve the use of evidence in six key health areas: stroke rehabilitation, mental health, reduction of birth defects, pain management, osteoporosis and Indigenous health.

NICS is Australia's national agency for improving health care by closing important gaps between evidence and practice. Through its Fellowship program NICS provides access to knowledge and leadership in the field of evidence implementation to promising Australian health care professionals.

"We know there is a lot of evidence already available that is not being put into practice and which can positively impact on the quality of care people receive. Getting evidence into practice is not easy, so we have developed our unique Fellowship program to help build Australia's own cohort of experts and leaders in the science and practice of evidence implementation," said Dr Heather Buchan, Chief Executive Officer of NICS.

The two year program provides NICS Fellows with funding, new skills, networks and knowledge to bridge an important gap in the delivery of health care by undertaking an evidence implementation project in their workplace. Since launching their Fellowship program in 2003, NICS has awarded 11 Fellowships.

"We have already seen the impact of this program through our graduating Fellows, both in terms of improved local health care delivery and national policy," said Dr Buchan.

"We know there are many gaps between actual practice and the evidence and lots of talented health professionals looking to close these gaps, so we're delighted that more co-sponsors have joined us to provide these Fellowships for 2007."

Two of the 2007 Fellows are being supported by NICS, and four are jointly co-sponsored by NICS and external organisations with an interest in improving health care for all Australians – the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), The Victorian Trauma Foundation (VTF), and the Hospitals Contribution Fund (HCF) Health and Medical Research Foundation.

"NICS is delighted to welcome this latest group of health professionals to take up their Fellowships," said Dr Buchan. "We look forward to working with them as they develop and implement their projects to improve health care in Australia." .../2

## NICS Fellowships 2007

### NICS sponsored Fellowships:

**Mr John Cannell** (Physiotherapist, Launceston Hospital, Tasmania)

Achieving optimal arm function in people rehabilitating following stroke.

**Evidence-Practice gap:** Only 30% of stroke survivors recover functional use of their arm. There are several strategies known to improve arm function following stroke but they are not routinely implemented.

**Ms Bridget Hamilton** (Registered Nurse and Lecturer, St Vincent's Hospital, Victoria)

Reducing the use of seclusion in acute inpatient mental health care

**Evidence-Practice gap:** Seclusion of patients is sometimes used in public mental health services to manage unwanted or harmful behaviours. In some instances its use is inappropriate. There is increasing evidence that this practice should be minimised.

### NICS-DVA (Department of Veteran Affairs) Fellowship:

**Dr Charles Inderjeeth** (Geriatrician and Rheumatologist, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Nedlands, Western Australia).

Improving awareness, investigation and management of osteoporosis in women presenting with a fracture

**Evidence-practice gap:** There is good evidence that effective management of osteoporosis can reduce further fractures. While fractures resulting from osteoporosis are adequately treated, the osteoporosis itself is not always addressed.

### NICS-VTF (Victorian Trauma Foundation) Fellowship:

**Mr Terry Marshall** (Clinical Support Officer, Metropolitan Ambulance Service, Victoria)

Improving the assessment and management of acute pain by ambulance services

**Evidence-Practice gap:** There is strong evidence as to the most effective means of measuring and treating pain after trauma, and an opportunity to improve the current practice in the pre-hospital setting.

### NICS-HCF (Hospital Contributions Fund Health and Medical Research Foundation) Fellowships:

**Associate Professor Danielle Mazza** (Associate Professor, Department of General Practice, Monash University, Victoria).

Promoting periconceptual folate supplementation in general practice in order to reduce neural tube defects

**Evidence-practice gap:** Adequate intake of folate can prevent 70 per cent of neural tube defects. Many women of child-bearing age are unaware of this association and improved pre-conception care in general practice will help increase their dietary intake to recommended levels.

**Ms Bhavini Patel** (Director of Pharmacy, Department of Health and Community Services, Casuarina, Northern Territory)

Improving management of chronic kidney disease in remote indigenous communities

**Evidence-practice gap:** There is strong evidence that managing high blood pressure can delay the need for dialysis and that an arteriovenous fistula is the most effective means of creating a permanent access to veins for people needing haemodialysis. Better systems of care are required to target gaps between best evidence and current health care delivery.

Ends/...

Media contact: Meredith Cameron, T: 03 88660409, M: 0409 383 152  
[mcameron@nicssl.com.au](mailto:mcameron@nicssl.com.au)

For more information about the NICS Fellowship Program including media releases for each Fellowship: [www.nicssl.com.au](http://www.nicssl.com.au) (program section)

### Note to editors

**The National Institute of Clinical Studies** (NICS), [www.nicssl.com.au](http://www.nicssl.com.au), is Australia's national agency for improving health care by helping close important gaps between best available evidence and current clinical practice. NICS is funded by the Australian Government. NICS will become an institute of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) on 1 April 2007.

As part of NICS' transfer to the NHMRC, the Commonwealth, as the member of NICS, has appointed a liquidator under the members' voluntary winding up provisions of the Corporations Act. This is the mechanism used to wind up a company that is able to pay its debts and meet its commitments. During the transfer, NICS' business operations will continue as normal.

The NICS Fellowship program was launched in 2003 to close evidence-practice gaps by supporting health professionals to undertake practical projects that aim to improve health outcomes for people by getting high quality evidence into everyday clinical practice.

The two-year, part-time Fellowships are open to early- to mid-career health professionals 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.**

In October 2006, NICS celebrated the graduation of their first two Fellows, Dr Vitali Sintchenko, from the Centre for Health Informatics at the University of New South Wales, and Dr Shane Jackson, a Research Fellow at the Tasmanian School of Pharmacy. We expect a further four Fellows to graduate from the program this year and are currently seeking 2008 sponsors.

#### ***About our sponsors:***

**The Department of Veterans' Affairs** supports those who serve or have served in defence of our nation and commemorates their service and sacrifice. DVA does this by providing compensation and income support entitlements, delivering health care and rehabilitation services, and fulfilling Australia's commitment to remember and honour those who serve our nation.

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

**The Victorian Trauma Foundation** is a not-for-profit organisation that is committed to saving and improving lives through research and development. The Foundation aims to improve the delivery of care in the emergency, clinical and primary rehabilitation setting to trauma patients in Victoria, with the goal of achieving a substantial reduction in preventable death and permanent disabilities throughout the state.

[www.vtf.com.au](http://www.vtf.com.au)

**The HCF 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.

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