Seventeen of Australia’s best clinical researchers have received prestigious National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Practitioner Fellowships to conduct research that is strongly informed by their careers in health care.

Practitioner Fellows are awarded to active clinicians and public health or health services professionals to undertake research that is linked to their work.

The Fellows will continue to work with their patients and communities throughout their research, as they investigate conditions such as multiple sclerosis, diabetes, depression and food allergies.

NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson said the grants are unique in their ability to embed research within the health system and improve research translation – a core mission for the Council.

“The Practitioner Fellowships scheme is a key part of NHMRC’s commitment to help bridge the gap between creating new knowledge through research and the implementation of that knowledge into health care practice and policy,” Professor Anderson said.

“Clinicians who conduct research in addition to practicing medicine are in a unique position to rapidly implement the outcomes of their research. They also have the advantage of using their experiences in health care to determine areas where there is a need for new solutions or more evidence,” he said.

“Translating research outcomes into practice is a challenge for health systems the world over and fraught with obstacles. Embedding research in the health system is a good way to help overcome some of these barriers and help Australian people reap the benefits of research as soon as possible.”

Professor Anderson also noted the high calibre of researchers who are successful in securing a NHMRC Practitioner Fellowship.

“Practitioner Fellowships are prestigious, highly competitive, sought after awards for researchers who perform in the top 10% of their field. All have strong track records of using their
experiences in the health system to inform their research, and vice versa,” Professor Anderson said.

The fellowships were one part of an announcement made by Minister for Health, Peter Dutton today, which also included $4.5 million for an NHMRC Mental Health Targeted Call for Research and $54.6 million for Research Fellowships.

**Practitioner Fellowship highlights**

Professor Katrina Allen, Murdoch Children’s Research Institute ($459,687)

Professor Allen’s research group was the first to prove the food allergy epidemic in Australia by demonstrating that an unprecedented 1 in 10 infants have a clinically confirmed food allergy. The group also described several modifiable lifestyle factors which may reverse this phenomenon. Her vision for this fellowship and beyond is to prevent food allergies in children by understanding how allergies develop, why some children grow out of them, what factors lead to anaphylaxis as well as ways to improve food safety.

Professor Jodie Dodd, University of Adelaide ($551,436)

In Australia more than 50% of pregnant women are overweight or obese, which has short and long term adverse outcomes for both mums and their children. Professor Dodd’s research will evaluate the role of maternal overweight and obesity on the health outcomes of mothers, infants and children and will directly inform clinical guidelines to help alleviate the negative consequences of maternal obesity.

Professor Jon Emery, University of Melbourne ($459,687)

It is important that patients and GPs are able to understand the initial symptoms of cancer to encourage early intervention. Professor Emory’s work will develop and test interventions to promote earlier cancer diagnoses, including how people interpret symptoms and choose to seek help from their doctors.

A full list of the outcomes from today’s grants announcement is available on the [NHMRC website](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au).

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