$12 million of research to bring relief to people with arthritis

Research to better treat arthritis and improve pain management has received a nearly $12 million boost following the announcement of new National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grants today.

The grants each take a unique research approach to the challenge of improving outcomes for people with arthritis, from developing a better understanding of impaired functioning of the immune system that leads to arthritis, to targeting pain perception.

NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson described the disease burden of arthritis and its prevalence “as a major cause of disability in Australia. A survey from 2011-12 found that around 3.3 million people or nearly 15% of all Australians had arthritis.”

He added that it is not just a condition of older Australians but that “Two out of three people with arthritis are between 15 and 60 years of age.”

“For these reasons, the research grants announced today are vital in leading us towards improvements in arthritis treatment and pain management.”

Arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions are one of the Australian Government's nine National Health Priority Areas.

“The government’s National Health Priority Areas are also all strongly supported research areas for NHMRC,” Professor Anderson affirmed. “In this current round of funding, around $308 million is going towards research focused on the NHPAs.”

The grants were part of a $539.8 million announcement made today by Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Minister for Health Peter Dutton, for 773 grants across a broad range of diseases and health conditions.

Research highlights

Professor Kim Bennell, University of Melbourne, Centre for Research Excellence ($2,500,000)
This Centre for Research Excellence will help improve the uptake and implementation of research and evidence-based recommendations in practice and ultimately improve outcomes for people with musculoskeletal pain.

**Associate Professor Anita Wluka, Monash University, Project Grant ($401,362)**

This research will seek to improve pain management for people with knee osteoarthritis. Associate Professor Wluka and her team will conduct a randomised controlled trial to determine whether a particular drug offers relief for people with knee osteoarthritis who have become sensitised to pain.

**Dr Michael Doran, Queensland University of Technology, Project Grant ($516,398)**

Dr Doran and his team recently developed a hydrogel for repairing damaged cartilage. Through this Project Grant, they will work to improve the hydrogel’s effectiveness, including improving how it is delivered to the cartilage within arthritic joints.

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**Further information**

More information about the grants announced today can be found on the NHMRC website under [Outcomes of funding rounds](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/).