MEDIA RELEASE

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Research brings new hope for asthma sufferers

New research is set to deliver better treatments and better care for people with asthma, following the announcement of $12.5 million in funding for 18 new National Health and Medical Research (NHMRC) grants today.

NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson spoke of the importance of these grants to help improve asthma management and prevention.

“The prevalence of asthma in Australia is high by international standards, with 1 in 10 of us having asthma,” Professor Anderson said.

“Asthma also affects our Indigenous population disproportionately – mortality due to asthma is more than three times higher among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.”

“The regular episodes of coughing and struggling for breath that accompany asthma are terrible, terrifying experiences and can very much impact on quality of life for asthmatics,” he said.

“Health and medical research stands to make a huge difference in this area and the grants in the current funding round have the potential to make asthma a less debilitating condition.”

Asthma is one of the Australian Government’s nine National Health Priority Areas (NHPAs).

“The government’s NHPAs are also 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 Peter Gibson, University of Newcastle, Centre for Research Excellence ($2,498,171)

This Centre for Research Excellence in Severe Asthma, being led by Professor Gibson, will seek to improve outcomes for people with severe asthma. The aims of the CRE include
improving care for people with asthma and understanding how treatments could be tailored to different types of asthma and patient needs. Translating research into patient outcomes is a strong focus of this CRE, so the researchers will work to ensure their findings will be implemented into clinical practice and inform the training of health professionals.

Professor Shyamali Dharmage, University of Melbourne, Project Grant ($1,197,411)

Professor Dharmage’s research aims to improve our understanding of how early life exposures contribute to good or poor outcomes of young adolescents with asthma.

Professor Peter Le Souëf, University of Western Australia, Project Grant ($547,648)

Professor Le Souëf and his team will undertake a randomised clinical trial that will seek to improve how acute severe asthma in children is treated. The trial will be based on earlier findings by the team that human rhinovirus provokes a significant increase in levels of the antibody IgE, which is linked to severe acute asthma attacks.

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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.