Research to improve the treatment and prevention of diabetes has received a $54 million boost following the announcement of new National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grants today.

The 60 grants cover a range of innovative research projects, from studies exploring the relationship between artificial sweeteners and diabetes to research that seeks to prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes in children.

NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson acknowledged the importance of the grants and their potential to make real progress in treating diabetes.

“Diabetes is a complex disease that exists in many forms and affects around 990,000 Australians,” Professor Anderson said.

“Indigenous Australians are also three times more likely to have diabetes than non-Indigenous Australians – and consequently, be at risk for serious complications of diabetes such as heart attack, stroke and blindness.”

Diabetes is one of the Australian Government’s nine National Health Priority Areas.

“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.”

Today’s announcement includes three grants totalling $7.5 million that are jointly funded between NHMRC and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International (JDRFI); the world’s largest charitable supporter of type 1 diabetes research.

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**

Dr Richard Young, University of Adelaide, Project Grant ($853,134)
It is well understood that high-sugar diets high are linked to an increase in type 2 diabetes irrespective of total calorie intake, however recent research indicates that consumption of artificial sweeteners also puts individuals at risk of type 2 diabetes. Dr Young aims to find out why, and his research will test whether sweet taste receptors in the intestine, which do not discriminate between artificial or real sugars, are responsible. The research could lead to a new way to treat diabetes by focusing on intestine receptors and gut hormones.

**Associate Professor Louise Maple-Brown, Menzies School of Health Research, Project Grant ($2,295,625)**

This study aims to improve outcomes for pregnant women with pre-existing diabetes and to reduce the risk of pregnant women and their infants developing type 2 diabetes. Associate Professor Maple-Brown and her team will monitor the progress of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women during and after pregnancy, and track the health outcomes of their infants to identify contributors to rates and risk factors for type 2 diabetes and poor health outcomes.

**Professor Michael McGuckin, University of Queensland, Project Grant ($822,656)**

In Professor McGuckin’s past research, he and his team identified a protein, IL-22, that suppresses β-cell dysfunction – which is associated with negative physiological processes of type 2 diabetes. In administering IL-22 to obese mice, they restored complete glucose tolerance and insulin sensitivity along with other benefits. Under this current Project Grant, Professor McGuckin and his team will continue to investigate the potential of IL-22 to serve as an adjuvant therapy for type 2 diabetes.

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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](#).