MEDIA RELEASE

Up to $25 million for research to prepare Australia for genomics revolution

The National Health and Medical Research Council has opened a Targeted Call for Research into Preparing Australia for the Genomics Revolution in Health Care.

One successful team will receive up to $25 million across five years to conduct their research, making it one of the largest grants in NHMRC’s history.

Genomics is the study of genes, their functions, and how the way they interact influences growth, development, and health throughout life. It is increasingly being recognised as one of the most valuable emerging tools for understanding disease.

NHMRC’s Targeted Call for Research (TCR) will fund a research project that explores the role genomic medicine will play in improving prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease.

The research is expected to result in findings that will help health professionals apply genomics to the management of diseases such as cancer or diabetes.

Additionally, the research should improve our understanding of how genomic data will impact patient care, and identify the economic and policy impacts of incorporating genomic data into health system activities.

It is expected that the successful team will be multi-disciplinary and nationally focused, drawing on the expertise of Australia’s best researchers in this field.

NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson spoke about the potential of genomic medicine and its growing importance in health and medicine.

“Genomic medicine is truly the next frontier in how we will approach the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease,” Professor Anderson said.

“In health care today, we can already see how genomics is making a difference in the diagnosis of some diseases, including certain types of cancers. The research conducted through this Targeted Call for Research will yield new knowledge that will help us to understand how best to use the power of genomics to improve patient treatment.” he said.
“Genomic medicine has the potential to revolutionise health care, but to meet that aspiration, our understanding of the field needs to be built on the sort of rigorous research this TCR will fund.”

Preparing Australia for the ‘omics’ revolution in health care was identified as a major health issue for NHMRC in its 2012-15 Strategic Plan.

“Separate of this $25 million grant, NHMRC is working with practitioners, policy makers and the community to help Australia deal with the health and ethical implications of these new technologies and ensure that we can make the most of what genomics has to offer health and medicine,”

As part of this broader work, NHMRC last year released resources for health professionals and consumers on direct-to-consumer genetic DNA testing, which are available from the NHMRC website.

NHMRC is also collaborating internationally through the Global Alliance for Genomics and Health and the Global Genomic Medicine Collaboration.

The Targeted Call for Research into Preparing Australia for the Genomics Revolution in Health Care closes on 13 May. Further information is available on the NHMRC website.

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