MEDIA RELEASE

25 MARCH

$98 million to support large scale grants

Eleven grants worth an average of almost $9 million each to support big teams tackle big ideas were announced today.

The NHMRC Program Grants support teams of high calibre researchers pursue broad, multi-disciplinary and collaborative research in some of the most complex areas of health and medical research.

NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson said the grants are the largest available from NHMRC and went towards long term studies conducted by world-leading researchers.

“These grants support research teams for five years and incorporate researchers from a wide range of disciplines. Many of the big questions in health and medical research are increasingly complex and require experts from a number of fields working together to find innovative solutions,” Professor Anderson said.

“For these issues, the future of medical research is not individuals working on components in isolation, but many brains working together to bounce ideas off one another and explore leads alongside one another,” he said.

The grants go towards health issues including malaria, ovarian cancer, melanoma and chronic kidney disease amongst others.

The largest grant, worth more than $16 million, was awarded to Professor Samuel Berkovic to investigate the genetic causes of epilepsy. Professor Berkovic received the Prime Minister’s Prize for Science along with co-investigator Professor Ingrid Scheffer earlier this year.

“Program Grants are awarded on the basis that recent outstanding achievements are the best indicators of future performance. All researchers supported by these grants already have exceptionally strong records of achievement,” Professor Anderson said.

The grants were part of a $123.5 million announcement made by Minister for Health Sussan Ley today.

Grant highlights

Professor Samuel Berkovic, University of Melbourne ($16,110,300)
This research builds on Professor Berkovic’s award-winning body of work into epilepsy.
Professor Berkovic and his team will apply four approaches – genetics, imaging, physiology/pharmacology and deep phenotyping – to characterise the causes and mechanisms of epilepsy to develop personalised therapies.

Team: Professor Graeme Jackson, Professor Jozef Gecz, Professor Alan Connelly, Professor Ingrid Scheffer, Professor Terence O'Brien, Associate Professor Steven Petrou, Associate Professor Fernando Calamante, Associate Professor Christopher Reid

Professor Richard Kefford, Macquarie University ($14,663,120)

Professor Kefford’s research seeks to deliver improvements in the prevention, treatment and detection of melanoma by conducting a large-scale genomic analysis of people with melanoma and people who are predisposed to developing the cancer. Through their research, they hope to generate new knowledge that will lead to better melanoma treatments and improvements in the management of high risk populations.

Team: Professor John Thompson, Professor Peter Hersey, Professor Graham Mann, Professor Richard Scolyer, Professor Nicholas Hayward, Associate Professor Georgina Long

Professor David Bowtell, University of Melbourne ($7,088,520)

This research takes a genetic approach to improving outcomes for women with ovarian cancer (OC) and reducing the risk to others of developing OC. Professor Bowtell and his team will seek to develop novel therapies for OC based on analysis of somatic mutations, and identify better methods for reducing risk of developing the cancer through genetic analysis of OC.

Team: Professor Michael Friedlander, Professor Ian Campbell, Associate Professor Paul James

Further information
More information about the grants announced today can be found on the NHMRC website under Outcomes of funding rounds.

CONTACT: NHMRC Media Team

M: 0422 008 512
E: media@nhmrc.gov.au