

Media Release

EMBARGO 3:30pm, 29 January 2007

New hope for septic shock patients

Research from Melbourne's Howard Florey Institute and the Austin Hospital has resulted in a drug to treat kidney failure during septic shock, which will be trialled at the Austin Hospital from mid-2007.

To help progress and financially back the drug's development, the Florey and Starfish Ventures, a leading Australian venture capital firm, have formed a start-up company, 'Nephrodynamics Pty Ltd'.

Septic shock can occur if a patient contracts a bacterial infection after surgery. It is the main cause of mortality in Intensive Care Units (ICUs) and has up to a 40% mortality rate.

Patients who experience acute kidney failure during septic shock can require dialysis for up to two weeks, which costs the national health budget \$50 million annually.

Nephrodynamics's research has focused on treating kidney failure during and after septic shock, but the drug it is developing could eventually treat other causes of kidney failure.

Dr Clive May from the Howard Florey Institute said the mechanisms causing the blood flow changes in kidney failure were unknown.

"It is currently thought that blood flow to the kidneys is due to constriction of the blood vessels in the kidney but we have proven this theory incorrect.

"This discovery has helped us develop a drug that could be a kidney-saving therapy for septic shock patients," Dr May said.

Head of Research at the Austin Hospital's Intensive Care Unit, Prof Rinaldo Bellomo, said this drug could not only prevent kidney failure in patients with infection, but also in those with other causes of acute kidney injury.

"Kidney failure from septic shock has a high mortality rate and the current treatments are inadequate, so we urgently need a therapy to save the kidneys and lives of those who develop septic shock," Prof Bellomo said.

"The first stage of clinical trials soon to be conducted will give us an indication of the potential benefits of our new kidney protective septic shock treatment," he said.

The Howard Florey Institute is committed to translating its taxpayer-funded research into tangible public health outcomes to benefit all Australians.

Bringing together research and business to create companies such as Nephrodynamics accelerates drug development and supports Victoria's emerging biotechnology industry.

About the Howard Florey Institute

The Howard Florey Institute is Australia's leading brain research centre. Its scientists undertake clinical and applied research that can be developed into treatments to combat brain disorders, and new medical practices. Their discoveries will improve the lives of those directly, and indirectly, affected by brain and mind disorders in Australia, and around the world. The Florey's research areas cover a variety of brain and mind disorders including Parkinson's disease, stroke, motor neuron disease, addiction, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, autism and dementia.

About Starfish Ventures

Established in 2001, Starfish Ventures is an Australian owned venture capital fund manager seeking superior returns through active investment in innovative technology companies. Starfish Ventures has over \$150 million in funds under management and has made investments in over 20 companies to date. Starfish seeks investments in emerging Australian businesses across all technology sectors including, information and communications technology, biotechnology and life sciences, information and communications technology, industrial technology and material sciences. The team's track record includes Australian technology success stories ResMed, Moldflow, Preston Aviation Solution Engana and Sirtex Medical. Further information about Starfish Ventures can be found at www.starfishventures.com.au

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY

Dr Clive May, Prof Rinaldo Bellomo and Michael Pannacio from Starfish Ventures will be available for interviews at **3:30pm on Monday 29 January** at the Howard Florey Institute, 161 Barry Street, Carlton South. Please phone **Merrin Rafferty** on **0400 829 601** for further details.

ENDS

For more information contact:

Merrin Rafferty

Public Relations Manager

Howard Florey Institute

Ph: (03) 8344 1658 M: 0400 829 601

Email: m.rafferty@hfi.unimelb.edu.au

Web: www.hfi.unimelb.edu.au