

Media Release

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HOWARD FLOREY INSTITUTE

Brain research wins \$1 million

One of Australia's leading neuroscience researchers has been awarded \$1 million dollars to fund his ongoing cutting-edge Australian research into brain disorders.

Dr Anthony Hannan from the Howard Florey Institute in Melbourne has won a Pfizer Australia Fellowship, believed to be Australia's largest single private medical research grant, after a grueling independent selection process.

There were six finalists from across the country vying for the two coveted Fellowships.

Dr Hannan's said his recent work demonstrated that environmental factors such as mental and physical exercise can delay the onset of some degenerative brain diseases such as Huntington's Disease (HD).

"To be chosen for this Fellowship is a great honour as I was competing with Australia's top medical researchers," Dr Hannan said.

"Attracting medical research funding can be tough, so the Pfizer Fellowship will allow me to concentrate on my research and secure my group's research over the next five years," he said.

Huntington's disease is characterised by degeneration of the significant areas of the brain such as the cortex and striatum, producing motor, cognitive and psychiatric symptoms.

HD was thought to be the epitome of genetic determinism. Environmental enrichment of mice was found to dramatically delay onset and progression of brain disease.

Dr Hannan will use his Pfizer Australia Research Fellowship to further explore key areas of neuroscience, and work towards the eventual development of new therapeutic approaches for devastating brain diseases such as Huntington's, schizophrenia and Alzheimer's.

Dr Stephen Nutt from the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute has also been awarded a Pfizer Fellowship for 2006.

This is the fourth year of the Pfizer Fellowships, bringing the total number to nine, with each receiving \$1 million over a five-year period.

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, muscular dystrophy, autism and dementia.

Pfizer Australia is the nation's leading research-based health care company. It discovers, develops, manufactures and markets innovative medical treatments for both humans and animals. Pfizer Australia is investing \$A40m in local research and development. For more information visit www.pfizer.com.au

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