

# media release



Friday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2007

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## Sporting research aims to reduce childhood obesity

The Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI) is joining forces with award winning health and fitness organisation The Forum, managed by Newcastle University Sport (NUsport), to improve the health of current and future generations.

HMRI and The Forum will today (Friday 13 April) launch a new research partnership to investigate ways of increasing children's interest in sport, physical activity and long-term participation in sport.

The study, to be conducted by researchers Dr Christine Paul and Dr Erica James, is funded by The Forum and was announced today as part of the organisation's further commitment to reducing childhood obesity in the Hunter.

The HMRI and The Forum research partnership was established to identify the proportion of children who increase their sporting activity following attendance at The Forum Holiday Camps.

The study will begin during the winter school holidays and will continue for approximately six months. During this time children, with the assistance of their parents, will participate in a series of questionnaires.

"The rate of childhood obesity has risen greatly in many nations in the past 20 years. Physical activity plays an important role in preventing or reducing the severity of the condition but little is known about how to increase and maintain children's involvement in organised sporting activity," said Dr Christine Paul from the Centre for Health Research and Psycho-oncology (CHeRP)\* and the University of Newcastle.

"This research will involve children aged between 5 and 12 and will help us identify whether involvement in The Forum Holiday Camp itself increases children's interest in particular sports and whether that interest translates into increased long-term activity."

The Forum General Manager, Samantha Martin-Williams, said that the partnership was built upon strong links between HMRI and the Hunter's health and fitness sector.

"Our relationship with the University of Newcastle and our partnerships with organisations like HMRI provide us with the unique opportunity to use sound knowledge and research to develop programs for the wider community," she said.

"Through this partnership study we hope to assist our industry and the wider community to improve our kids' physical activity and their health.

"We hope that this HMRI partnership will help us understand ways that we can tackle one of this region's greatest health issues – reducing the incidence of childhood obesity."

\* CHeRP is a collaboration of the Cancer Council NSW and the University of Newcastle and is jointly funded by these bodies.

### **Media opportunity - Launch of the partnership between HMRI and The Forum**

**Friday 13<sup>th</sup> April at 11am – The Forum Sports & Aquatic Centre, University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan** (*Paid parking is available in University car parks 9, 12 and 13*)

**Dr Christine Paul and Samantha Martin-Williams will be available for interview and vision/photo opportunities with children participating in The Forum's Holiday Camp program.**

**Media contact: Lauren Eyles, HMRI Communication Officer, phone 4921 4841 or 0434 600 940.**

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THE FORUM