



MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Health and Ageing

Tony Abbott MHR

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'10 of the best' medical research projects

Research into diabetes, Parkinson's disease, mental health and cancer has been showcased in a booklet released today.

The *'10 of the best'* booklet highlights ten successful research projects funded by the Commonwealth Government through the National Health and Medical Research Council.

The research outcomes highlighted in the booklet have been internationally recognised and in some cases are leading the development of international practice. The booklet has been written for the general public to demonstrate the benefits of research resulting from public investment.

By 2009-10, the Commonwealth Government will have increased by four times its annual investment in NHMRC grants for health and medical research since 1999-00. This year, funding for health and medical research from the health and ageing portfolio will reach almost \$500 million. In addition, funding of \$215 million was announced in the 2006-07 Budget for a number of research facilities to improve their infrastructure.

Australia is a world leader in health and medical research—on a per capita basis our research output is twice the OECD average. A report from Access Economics states from every \$1 invested in medical research \$5 is returned to the Australian economy.

'10 of the best' is available on the NHMRC web site at www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications

A summary of the highlighted projects is attached.

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**NHMRC-FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECTS FEATURED
IN THE “10 OF THE BEST”**

- ***The cost of a common sore throat***—study gathered vital data on the prevalence and seriousness of streptococcal infections and their treatment in the community. The results will inform the development and use of public health guidelines for such infections.
Professor Jonathon Carapetis, University of Melbourne
Contact: Rebecca Scott 03 8344 0181 or 0417 164 791

- ***Exercise is the key in the battle against diabetes***—physical activity increased the delivery of glucose and oxygen by blood vessels that have become insulin resistant due to the onset of Type 2 diabetes. Provides the logical base for using exercise in the management of Type 2 diabetes.
Professor Michael Clark, University of Tasmania
Contact: UTAS Media Office, 03 6226 2124 or 0417 517 291

- ***Drugs and the mental health of our young***—comprehensive study of adolescent health discovered a link between frequent teenage cannabis use and the later onset of mental disorders. This will inform strategies to prevent mental health problems in our youth.
Professor George Patton, Murdoch Children’s Research Institute, Melbourne
Contact: Alyssa Jones, 0413 331 816

- ***Community attitudes to colorectal cancer screening***—uncovering the drivers and deterrents of colorectal screening to assist the uptake and effectiveness of the upcoming National Colorectal Screening Program, which is expected to reduce colorectal cancer deaths by up to 40 per cent.
Professor Graeme Young, Flinders University, SA
Contact: Tim Hayward-Brown, 08 8201 2962

- ***Supercomputer virtual brain signalling***—a supercomputer simulated the workings of the ion channels underpinning the communication between our nerves. Findings will improve our understanding of how the cells in the brain interact and help to identify causes and possible cures for neurological and muscular disorders
Dr Shin-Ho Chung, Australian National University, ACT
Contact: Jane O’Dwyer 02 6125 5001 or 0416 249 231

- ***Breastfeeding decreases the chance of asthma***—babies that are exclusively breastfed for at least six months receive significant protection from the development of asthma and other respiratory illness.
 Dr Wendy Oddy, Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, Perth
 Contact: Tammy Gibbs 08 9489 7963
- ***The lower the blood pressure, the better***—worldwide study involving 160,000 participants shows that the lower the blood pressure the more protection patients receive against heart attack and stroke. Findings also demonstrate that older and cheaper drugs used to lower blood pressure are as effective at reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease as newer, more costly drugs.
 Associate Professor Bruce Neal, George Institute for International Health, Sydney
 Contact: Emma Orpilla 02 9993 4592 or 0410 411 983
- ***Solving the puzzle of Parkinson's***—understanding the changes in a pigment discovered in high quantities in degenerating nerve cells associated with the onset of Parkinson's disease led to the development of a more accurate method to diagnose the illness.
 Dr Kay Double, Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute, Sydney
 Contact: Anne Graham 02 9399 1077 or 0411 783 027
- ***Preventing prostate cancer***—a new molecule found to be linked to prostate cancer can now be used to diagnose the disease, as well measuring its progression and the effectiveness of treatment.
 Professor Judith Clements, Queensland University of Technology
 Contact: Janne Rayner 07 3864 2361
- ***Decreasing diabetes in remote Indigenous communities***—the research team established diabetes care guidelines that have decreased the number of Indigenous hospitalisations due to diabetes complications in remote communities.
 Professor Robyn McDermott, University of South Australia
 Contact: Michele Nardelli 0418 823 673