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MEDIA RELEASE

New fellowship to study multiple sclerosis

Sunday, February 25, 2006

The University of Queensland today announced the launch of a new fund to improve understanding of, and work towards a cure for, multiple sclerosis.

UQ Vice-Chancellor [Professor John Hay, AC](#), announced that the University would contribute \$25,000 towards a fund to establish a Multiple Sclerosis Senior Research Fellowship to be based at the University's [Queensland Brain Institute](#).

"I hope the University's initiative will encourage private and corporate donors to come forward to support this project," Professor Hay said.

"We hope to raise a total amount of \$450,000 to secure this fellowship, which will undertake important new research in multiple sclerosis (MS).

Board Secretary of the [Multiple Sclerosis Society of Queensland](#) Trevor Farrell announced that the Society would provide matching funding towards the fellowship.

Mr Farrell said MS was a devastating condition that attacked the central nervous system of people in the prime of their lives.

"The onset of the condition usually occurs when people are aged in their 20s to 40s. An estimated 16,000 Australians have MS, with 1000 new diagnoses a year," Mr Farrell said.

"This equates to a financial cost of \$600 million per year, not to mention the physical and emotional effects it has on people for the rest of their lives."

In Australia, the human cost of MS, a neurological disorder, is growing at an alarming rate of 7 percent per annum and affects three times more women than men.

The new MS Senior Research Fellow at UQ's Queensland Brain Institute will investigate one of the primary effects of MS, the progressive loss of myelinating cells or oligodendrocytes.

The QBI was established in 2003 and is one of the largest neuroscience institutes in the world, focused on discovering fundamental mechanisms underlying brain-disease processes.

It has already established a core of world-renowned leading neuroscientists, under the direction of its founding Director, [Professor Perry Bartlett](#), who is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science, Federation Fellow and UQ Foundation Chair in Molecular Neuroscience.

Professor Bartlett said the QBI had established a formidable array of technologies and, together with state-of-the-art facilities, was poised to progress research efforts into reducing the effects of brain disorders.

He said QBI researchers were dedicated to unlocking the mysteries of the many neurodegenerative diseases and mental health disorders, which currently accounted for a staggering 45 percent of the burden of disease in Australia.

"Public generosity helps QBI to continue much-needed research, funding new facilities, programs, research and scholarships," he said.

People wishing to support the new fund for the MS Senior Research Fellowship through gifts or donations can contact the University's Office of University Development and Graduate Relations www.development.uq.edu.au/ or telephone 07 3346 3909.

The MS Society of Queensland promotes research to cure MS and provides equitable, high quality specialised services for the benefit of people with Multiple Sclerosis.

To support the work of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Queensland, please contact 07 3840 0888 or visit <http://www.msaustralia.org.au/qld/weneedyou/index.htm>.

Media: Further information, Jan King 0413 601 248 (UQ) Ron Hohenhaus (QBI), telephone 0434 601 066 or Kathy Mahboop (MS Society of Queensland) telephone 0407 650 002.

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