



THE GEORGE INSTITUTE
for International Health

MEDIA RELEASE
EMBARGO: 1 September 2006, 10:00AM

THE LOWER THE BLOOD PRESSURE THE BETTER

The Minister for Health and Ageing, Tony Abbott, today launched a new book showcasing the best in Australian health research from recent years. The *'10 of the Best'* book highlights ten world-leading medical research projects and includes the largest ever study of the effects of blood pressure lowering medications on the major killers, stroke and heart attack.

The George Institute for International Health established the Blood Pressure Lowering Treatment Trialists' Collaboration in 1995. The results of this collaboration are a cornerstone of blood pressure guidelines in Australia and around the world. Most notably, the project highlights the need for renewed efforts to achieve better blood pressure control.

The research, has also uncovered important differences in the effectiveness of different types of blood pressure lowering drugs. Most recently, the work of the collaboration has provided important insight into possible differences in the protection provided by two drug classes often considered interchangeable – ACE inhibitors and angiotensin receptor blockers.

Principal investigator of the study, Dr Bruce Neal, Senior Director at The George Institute said, "This has been a huge research effort spanning over a decade. The results have had direct clinical implications for hundreds of millions of people with high blood pressure worldwide." He added that, "While we have identified differences between drug classes, the most important finding is that aggressive treatment to drive blood pressure down to really low levels provides the greatest protection. The number of drugs, not the choice of drugs, is more important for most people."

Worldwide, high blood pressure (or hypertension) is responsible for around 7 million deaths annually. With an estimated 600 million people having hypertension, this study makes a major contribution to our knowledge on how best to prevent the growing epidemic of death and disability from blood pressure related disease. Results of the study have been published in the *Lancet* on two occasions and include data from over 160,000 individuals in more than 50 countries, including Australia and New Zealand.

The '10 of the best' booklet was written for the general public to demonstrate the benefits of medical research resulting from public investment.

Australia is a world leader in health and medical research – on a per capita basis, our research output is twice the OECD average. Medical research makes good health and economic sense. A report by Access Economics shows that for every \$1 invested in medical research, \$5 is returned to the Australian economy.

The '10 of the Best' has been developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). The booklet is available on the web at www.nhmrc.gov.au and also by calling the NHMRC on 1800 020 103.

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Notes to Editor:

The George Institute for International Health is an internationally-recognised health research body, undertaking high impact research across a broad health landscape. The Institute is centrally involved with Australian community health issues in Aboriginal health, ethnic community health, road safety and injury, mental health, ageing, healthcare access, clinical practice in Australian hospitals and health policy development.

It is also a leader in the clinical trials, health policy and capacity-building areas. Its research has a direct, practical impact on a wide range of healthcare, health policy, safety and socio-cultural issues facing Australians.

The Institute is affiliated with The University of Sydney, Sydney South West Area Health Services, and collaborates in its research with other prestige research institutes, clinical authorities and policy centres around the world.

Associate Professor Bruce Neal

Bruce Neal is a Senior Director, Research and Development at The George Institute for International Health, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Sydney, Heart Foundation Career Development Fellow and an Honorary Consultant Epidemiologist at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Bruce completed his medical training at Bristol University in the UK in 1990 and spent four years in clinical posts during which time he gained membership of the UK Royal College of Physicians. Prior to taking up his current post in 1999, he spent four years working as an epidemiologist at the Clinical Trials Research Unit in Auckland, New Zealand, where he completed his PhD in Medicine.

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