

National Foundation for Medical Research and Innovation



NFMRI

2015 NFMRI Awards

The 2015 NFMRI Awards were held on the 3rd of December 2015 in Sydney. The Awards saw us present our grants with funding commencing in 2015 and announce our grant round into infectious diseases with the NSW Department of Primary Industries (more information below).

We are thrilled to have held this event in collaboration with the NSW Department of Primary Industries, who recognise the importance of philanthropy, research and innovation.



Department of
Primary Industries

Events

SAVE THE DATE:
**NFMRI Medical
Research Innovation
Conference**
18-19 October 2016

TTS Australia 2016
12-13 April 2016,
Brisbane

AVCAL Conference
31 Aug - 1 Sept 2016,
Melbourne

2016 Grant Recipients

Dr Dixon Hughes OAM had the pleasure of announcing the recipients of 2016 grants. NFMRI wishes to congratulate all 2015 grant recipients with funding commencing or continuing in 2016. They include:

Congratulations to our 2016 grant recipients

Dr Sanjaya Kuruppu
Prof Mark Smythe
Dr Michelle Wykes
A/Prof Bernard Flynn
Prof Stephen Haswell
Prof Michael Good AO

Monash University
University of Queensland
QIMR Berghofer
Monash University
Deakin University
Griffith University

Alzheimer's disease
Asthma & allergies
Cancer
Cardiac fibrosis
Infectious diseases
Rheumatic heart disease

Dr Janet Davies	University of Queensland	Asthma & allergies
Dr Lenka Munoz	University of Sydney	Brain cancer
Dr Tim Molloy	Garvan Institute	Breast cancer
Prof John McAvoy	University of Sydney	Eye research

Our new grant commitments include the following:

A/Prof Bernard Flynn, Monash University

\$100,000 over one year

'Sphingolipid targeting agents in the treatment of cardiac fibrosis'

The particular focus of this application, cardiac fibrosis, is the lead cause of heart failure and a major cause of death in the western world. This collaborative research group has drawn together experts in cardiac fibrosis, cell signalling pathways, enzyme assays, medicinal chemistry and metabolomics to help identify a suitable biomolecular target for fibrosis and to design drug molecules to inhibit this target. The focus has been on a class of lipid signalling molecules called sphingolipids, which control cell functions particularly during infection, inflammation and wound healing. Support from NFMRI will enable A/Prof Flynn to access both internal collaborators such as the Monash Centre for Drug Candidate Optimization and external collaborators such as vivoPharm to assist with targeted studies.

Dr Michelle Wykes, QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute

\$213,402 over two years

'Novel co-stimulatory target for cancer immunotherapy'

Dr Michelle Wykes has identified galectin-9 on immune cells as a novel drug target for cancer therapy. Breakthrough research demonstrates that agents which activate this target cause immune cells to attack cancer cells and to develop an immune memory which may help to prevent cancer recurrence. The research aims to lay the groundwork for development of therapeutic antibodies against the target, which can ultimately be developed as a new class of cancer drugs. NFMRI funding will enable Dr Wykes to access external collaborators such as CSIRO for protein manufacture, the WEHI for antibody generation and purification, as well as Pepscan Presto BV for epitope mapping.

Dr Sanjaya Kuruppu, Monash University

\$90,000 over one year

'A potential new treatment for Alzheimer's Disease from a snake venom'

Dr Sanjaya Kuruppu has discovered for the first time a molecule (referred to as K49-P1-20), from the venom of a snake, which stimulates activity of two enzymes that clear amyloid beta. Previous studies have shown that increasing the expression of amyloid beta clearing enzymes can prevent the build-up of this protein and associated behavioural changes. Dr Kuruppu's preliminary data indicated that K49-P1-20 induced increase in enzyme activity results in accelerated breakdown of synthetic amyloid beta. This research study will use a mouse model of Alzheimer's disease to determine if this molecule can prevent the build-up of amyloid beta in the brain. Support from NFMRI will facilitate access to additional skill sets from an external collaborator at the University of Tasmania, including access to a mouse model relevant for Alzheimer's disease.

Prof Mark Smythe, The University of Queensland

\$80,078 over one year

'The development of human hematopoietic prostaglandin D2 synthase inhibitors (HPGD2s) for allergic asthma'

Professor Smythe's research team is pursuing new and innovative asthma therapies by targeting a different and specific enzyme, HPGD2S, involved in the inflammatory mechanisms of asthma. His team has developed and optimized a series of potent and specific inhibitors of HPGD2S that are orally bioavailable and efficacious in in vivo animal models. NFMRI's support will provide access to additional research studies and facilities to profile the compounds on human bronchial epithelial cells in order to study respiratory function. These studies will aid in the selection of drug candidates, which will provide efficacious treatment for the cause, not symptoms, of asthma. The funding in particular will provide access to external collaborator Asterand Bioscience in order to accelerate the identification and validation of their drug candidates.

Expressions of Interest Open for Infectious Diseases Grant Round

Thanks to generous support from the NSW Department of Primary Industries, we are holding a special purpose grant round for infectious diseases research.

The outcomes of the research project need to be of benefit to NSW. The research grant, however, is not limited to institutions and researchers based in NSW.

A total of \$400,000 is available to support one or more research projects, over up to three years, investigating infectious diseases. The funding will commence in 2016. Expressions of interest in portfolios 1, 2 and 3 will be accepted, though preference will be given to those that fall within portfolios 2 and 3.

More information including the form to submit and expression of interest can be found [here](#).

NFMRI wishes to thank the NSW Department of Primary Industries for their support.



Department of
Primary Industries

Save the Date: NFMRI Medical Research Innovation Conference – 18-19 October 2016

The NFMRI's second Medical Research Innovation Conference, *"Supporting Biomedical Innovations: Getting Innovations on the Right Track"*, will take place on the 18th and 19th of October 2016.

While our first conference sought to discuss and explore key issues affecting the medical research and innovation sector, our second conference will focus on exploring strategies and solutions to help build, support and grow the biomedical innovation sector in Australia. It will bring together local and international experts to explore four key themes focused around how private and social investments in medical research, together with different strategies and bold actions, can lead to the advancement of innovations. The program will also examine how we can increase Australia's capability and capacity to deliver results all whilst growing the local economy. This includes building a culture and funding ecosystem where industry, government, academia, venture capital and philanthropy converge to support innovations from beginning to end. Delegates will leave the conference with a better understanding of how to improve collaborations and how to build relationships between research and industry.

Please save the date in your diaries. More information, including a draft program, venue and location details and sponsorship opportunities will be made available in the new year.

2016 Grant Round

Our normal expressions of interest for our 2016 grant round will open on Monday, 1st February 2016 and close at 6pm AEST on Friday, 22nd April 2016. Forms will be made available from the 1st of February on our website: www.nfmri.org.au

Please note we will also be seeking nominations for the 2nd Dr John Dixon Hughes Medal for Medical Research Innovation. Nominations will also be open from the 1st of February 2016 and will also close at 6pm AEST on Friday, 22nd April 2016. More information about the medal can be found [here](#).

Recent Blog Posts

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