



Minister for Health and Aged Care
Minister for Sport
THE HON SUSSAN LEY MP

Media Release

3 December 2016

Australia's biggest clinical trial part of \$483m health research grants

The largest clinical trial ever undertaken in Australia is among \$483 million in grants for health and medical research funding announced today by the Minister for Health and Aged Care, Sussan Ley.

More than 1900 researchers will share in the \$483 million for a wide range of projects. This new funding will support 601 grants across four National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grant schemes.

Professor John McNeil of Monash University was awarded \$4,796,724 for the biggest clinical trial ever conducted in Australia, which will determine if a daily low dose of aspirin prevents disease in healthy older Australians.

This will bring the total investment in this clinical trial to over \$10 million.

The ASPREE trial is a joint Australia/US collaboration involving 16,700 Australians aged 70 and over and more than 2,000 Australian general practitioner collaborators. Another 2,500 participants are in the US. There are 6,000 participants from regional areas of Australia.

The funding will enable the study to complete its final stage of data collection to enable it to answer important questions about the benefits and risks of aspirin in this age group and its effects on disability-free survival.

Although established primarily to study low dose aspirin it has become an important vehicle to study many other aspects of the health of older Australians

Ms Ley said the Turnbull Government is committed to continuing medical research investment.

“We know that every dollar invested in medical research returns on average more than \$2 in benefits through reducing the burden of disease and driving productivity.

“This \$483 million investment allows our researchers to continue with their world-class and internationally-renowned research.

“It includes \$23 million for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, \$35 million for mental health research and \$123 million for cancer research, among other diseases and conditions.

“The Turnbull Government continues to lead the way in protecting our health now and into the future. From 2013 to 2016, funding under the NHMRC has increased by \$100 million from \$750 million to more than \$850 million.

“Over the next year the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) will distribute an additional \$61 million into new research, over and above NHMRC grant funding.”

Other projects funded include:

- Predicting the progressive phase of multiple sclerosis
- Understanding the association between traumatic brain injury and Alzheimer's disease
- Footwear for self-managing knee osteoarthritis symptoms
- Understanding the health impacts of sleep apnoea in Australian men
- Implementing population-based genetic testing for high-risk breast and ovarian cancer predisposition genes
- Understanding the early disease mechanisms of motor neurone disease
- Completing the largest clinical trial ever conducted in Australia to determine whether daily low dose aspirin prevents disease in healthy older people.

NHMRC CEO Professor Anne Kelso said: "The grants support an extraordinary breadth of research around Australia. They include 60 fellowships for our future research leaders, laboratory studies of the origins of disease and clinical trials of new therapies.

"The NHMRC is also funding a \$5 million Partnership Centre in Health System Sustainability, which will support the implementation of research-informed improvements in health care system performance."

More information on the grants is available on the [NHMRC website](#).

Media contacts:

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FUNDING HIGHLIGHTS

Dr Adam Walker, Macquarie University
\$692,486

Motor neurone disease (MND) and frontotemporal dementia (FTD) are incurable, fatal neurodegenerative diseases. MND and FTD patients have similar brain and spinal cord pathology, but the causes of disease remain unclear. Using new genetically modified mice that for the first time recapitulate key features of the human diseases, this project will define the biochemical processes that contribute to disease onset and progression and will test potential disease-modifying therapeutics.

Professor Amanda Leach, Menzies School of Health Research
\$1,021,486

Educational and health outcomes of Indigenous children are extremely poor, particularly in remote areas. High rates of ear disease, particularly "runny ears" and "glue ear", and hearing loss throughout early childhood contribute to developmental delay. Vaccines to prevent ear disease could be used more effectively. This project is evaluating a novel combination schedule of two different licenced vaccine formulations to maximise protection and improve ear health, hearing and school readiness.

Professor John McNeil, Monash University
\$4,796,724

ASPREE is the largest clinical trial ever conducted in Australia and will determine whether daily low dose aspirin prevents disease in healthy older people. The study was well-funded initially but will require additional support to complete the vital final stage of data collection and analysis. This will enable the study to answer important questions about the benefits and risks of aspirin in this age group and its effect on disability free survival.