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\$3m to strengthen Centenary Institute research

World-class study into inherited heart disease as well as Alzheimer's disease have been boosted after two Centenary Institute researchers successfully secured a total of \$3m in highly competitive National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funding.

Associate Professor Jodie Ingles, Head of the Institute's Clinical Cardiac Genetics Group in the Molecular Cardiology Program, was awarded a *Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies Grant* in excess of \$2m. This will fund a five-year study into inherited cardiomyopathies involving approximately 2,500 participants. The cohort of participants will be comprehensively investigated and followed over time, making this an extremely unique and important resource for better understanding these diseases.

"Inherited cardiomyopathies such as hypertrophic cardiomyopathy affect the heart muscle and are passed on genetically in families. There can be important health implications, including a risk of heart failure and sudden cardiac death," says A/Prof Ingles.

"There are many aspects of how we manage and treat inherited cardiomyopathies that are not well understood. Our study will follow participants over time to gain critical clinical and genetic insights. In doing so, we can then provide tailored advice regarding management, treatments, prognosis and family screening regarding the disease," she says.

Professor Jenny Gamble, Head of the Vascular Biology Program at the Centenary Institute was awarded an *Ideas Grant* of just under \$1m. The grant will fund research into Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia. Supported by secondary Chief Investigator Doctor Ka Ka Ting also from the Centenary Institute, the research program will focus on the blood vessels of the brain and their potential role in Alzheimer's development and progression.

"Alzheimer's disease is an age-related neurodegenerative disease that is on the rise due to our ageing population. Although we don't know yet what causes the disease it is thought that changes to the blood vessels in the brain are the earliest sign of Alzheimer's and actually predispose the patient to the development of the disease," says Professor Gamble.

"This grant will support our work on investigating the cells that form the barrier between the blood and the tissues, endothelial cells. We have identified significant age-related changes in these cells. We want to determine if the breakdown and dysfunction of these cells with age actually leads to, or makes Alzheimer's Disease more likely. If this is the case, our work will open the door to an entirely new approach to combatting the disease," she says.

In addition to the two Grants, the Centenary Institute's Laura Yeates received a NHMRC Postgraduate Scholarship for her study into 'Caring for families affected by sudden cardiac death of a young relative due to genetic heart disease.' Centenary's Natalia Pinello also received a NHMRC Postgraduate Scholarship for her study into 'RNA 5-hydroxymethylation in Haemopoiesis and Leukaemia.'

The Centenary Institute's Executive Director Professor Mathew Vadas believes the NHMRC support is a testament to the high-quality research being carried out at the Institute.

"I'd like to congratulate all of our wonderful researchers on their success. It is particularly pleasing that 3 out of the 4 recipients are early to mid-career researchers who are likely to emerge as leaders in the future. This funding will support essential research that has the potential to bring renewed health and hope to Australians and people around the world," says Professor Vadas.

[ENDS]

IMAGES:

Professor Jenny Gamble and Dr Ka Ka Ting

https://drive.google.com/file/d/126Z9vUOq2s0C0oBIW83S_xpOs0ozN9I6/view?usp=sharing

Associate Professor Jodie Ingles (two images)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KyTWadGcYYrQixZ2eISZTJkvqv66WAyX/view?usp=sharing>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CWrbW5p-fmIA0ejOdEEyV2pWyjr3WsCO/view?usp=sharing>

For all media enquiries and to interview the researchers, please contact

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About the Centenary Institute

The Centenary Institute is a world-leading independent medical research institute, closely affiliated to the University of Sydney and the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Our research focuses on three key areas: cancer, inflammation and cardiovascular disease. Our strength lies in uncovering disease mechanisms and applying this knowledge to improve diagnostics and treatments for patients.

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