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New study to investigate lung treatment for COVID-19

Dr Matt Johansen from the Centenary UTS Centre for Inflammation is the successful recipient of the Kenyon Foundation Inflammation Award for 2021. The Award, valued at \$20,000, will support Dr Johansen's study into the development of a potential new treatment for COVID-19 aimed at reducing excessive inflammation in the lungs.

"There's an urgent need to identify effective therapies that can be used to treat COVID-19 and significantly reduce mortality. Excessive lung inflammation is often the cause of severe disease and death in COVID-19," said Dr Johansen.

In his study, Dr Johansen will be targeting the NLRP3 inflammasome, a master regulator of inflammation which drives a cascade of downstream inflammatory processes in severely affected COVID-19 patients. A known inhibitor of the NLRP3 inflammasome—a molecule known as MCC950—will be investigated for its efficacy as a potential COVID-19 treatment.

"MCC950 has already been shown to mitigate lung inflammation associated with respiratory diseases such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)," said Dr Johansen.

"It's also been shown to be highly effective in alleviating virally-driven inflammation in influenza, suggesting it may also be an effective treatment for COVID-19."

Dr Johansen's study will be carried out at the Centenary Institute's high-containment PC3 facility, of which there are only four in Australia that are properly equipped to complete this form of specialised SARS-CoV-2 medical research.

"I am incredibly humbled to have been selected for this Award which will financially assist our efforts to identify the most effective therapies for COVID-19," said Dr Johansen.

"As governmental funding becomes increasingly difficult to acquire, philanthropic support from organisations such as the Kenyon Foundation are a significant boost that can promote fundamental scientific research that benefits us all."

David Kenyon, Trustee of the Kenyon Foundation said, "We're thrilled to be able to support Dr Johansen's research that could form the basis for new therapies for the treatment of COVID-19 that has the potential to change lives."

[ENDS]

Images:

Dr Matt Johansen

<https://tinyurl.com/1riq6wn4>

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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.

For more information about the Centenary Institute, visit centenary.org.au

About the Kenyon Foundation

The Kenyon Foundation is a Canberra based philanthropic fund established in 2016 by the children of Helen and the late Arthur Kenyon AM. The Kenyon family are long term residents of Canberra with Helen and Arthur bringing their young family to the National Capital in 1960. Helen and Arthur welcomed the opportunities that came with their new home city and they both contributed significantly to Canberra's social, commercial and charitable activities. The creation of the Kenyon Foundation by Helen and Arthur's children, sons David and Richard and daughter Louise, honours the hard work, aspirations and vision of their parents. The Kenyon Foundation provides financial support and encouragement to its community, in Canberra and beyond, through annual gifting programs and donations, particularly in the areas of education, sporting groups, cultural organisations, medical research and bodies assisting the disadvantaged, disabled and homeless.