

MEDIA RELEASE

24th September 2018

Finalists named in prestigious prize celebrating the next frontier in medical research

Three finalists are vying for gold in the 2018 Centenary Institute Medical Innovation Awards, with a total prize pool of \$55,000 on offer. The prestigious awards recognise the selfless pursuits of bold, young Australian researchers who are at the forefront of medical research.

Dr Ana Janic from the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute (VIC) is working to better understand a particular protein, known as p53. Scientists have been well-aware of p53's importance in preventing cancer, with more than half of human cancers occurring as a result of this protein not functioning properly. Dr Janic hopes improved knowledge about *how* p53 helps to prevent cancer will stimulate new approaches to therapy.

Dr Yiqing Lu from Macquarie University (NSW) has developed a new imaging technology powered by advanced nanoparticles, which will allow researchers and clinicians to look at multiple disease biomarkers inside the body simultaneously. Dr Lu's discovery is expected to reduce the pain, time and cost associated with disease diagnosis, and is especially practical for the diagnosis of deep-tissue disease such as breast and bladder cancers at the early stage.

Dr Kate McArthur from Monash University (VIC) has also embraced an imaging technique, called lattice light-sheet microscopy (LLSM), and genetically engineered a system which allowed her to video mitochondria inside the cell. Dr McArthur has been able to document what exactly takes place during cell "suicide" – a cell clearance process which is fundamental to the human body's development. The discovery could have practical implications for a wide range of inflammatory and autoimmune diseases, such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis.

These finalists have been selected following careful consideration from an international panel of adjudicators, who have again reiterated the excellent calibre of entries. This year's awards saw a record number of entries from 36 institutions or universities across six states and territories, representing the true breadth of brilliant scientific minds throughout the country.

Australia has also had its say and named Dr Neil Bretana from the Kirby Institute at UNSW as the 2018 People's Choice winner for his work into Hepatitis Virus C elimination.

All four scientists will be recognised at the 2018 Centenary Institute Medical Innovation Awards announcement ceremony in Sydney on **Wednesday 3rd October 2018**.

The winner of the In-Memory of Neil Lawrence Prize will receive \$30,000 from Commonwealth Private to support their project and a perpetual Nick Mount hand blown glass trophy. Second-place and third-place will receive \$15,000 and \$10,000, thanks to Bayer and Val Morgan respectively.

To arrange an interview with one of the finalists, please contact: Centenary Institute Media and Communications Manager, Laura Parr, l.parr@centenary.org.au, 0435 530 537

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

