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Prestigious grants success for Centenary Institute researchers

World-leading research into sudden cardiac death (SCD) in young people and multiple sclerosis has been boosted with two Centenary Institute researchers successfully securing prestigious Ideas Grants in the latest round of National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funding.

Professor Christopher Semsarian AM, Head of the Centenary Institute's Agnes Ginges Centre for Molecular Cardiology, has received funding of \$1.17 million for a three year study into the role of 'concealed cardiomyopathies' (diseases of the heart muscle) and SCD in the young (those people aged 35 years and under).

He believes that a significant proportion of unexplained sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) and SCD in the young is due to underlying genetic conditions, representing a preclinical concealed phase of disease.

"I hope to be able to better identify the precise genetic causes of SCD and SCA, with a focus on cardiomyopathy genes, using innovative state-of-the-art genomic technologies. This will enable more targeted clinical and genetic evaluation of at-risk families, resulting in earlier diagnosis of vulnerable family relatives, and appropriate initiation of treatment and prevention strategies. The ultimate goal is to prevent serious cardiac events and SCD in the young," said Professor Semsarian.

Associate Professor Anthony Don, Head of the Lipid Metabolism and Neurochemistry Laboratory at the Centenary Institute has received funding of \$925,000 for a four year study investigating drug-development opportunities for the treatment of multiple sclerosis (MS). The disease is caused by the immune system mistakenly attacking and depleting myelin, the fatty substance that insulates neurons in the nervous system.

"While we can effectively arrest the inflammatory component in many people with MS, the goal of functional recovery is hindered by our inability to stimulate myelin repair. This is the current frontier of MS research," said Associate Professor Don.

"I'll be exploring how the loss of certain key biochemical signals promotes myelin loss in MS, and how drugs that restore those signals may be used to protect and regenerate myelin in people with this disease."

Professor Mathew Vadas AO, Executive Director at the Centenary Institute, welcomed the announcement.

"NHMRC Ideas Grants are highly competitive and support innovative health and medical research projects. This is an outstanding result for two superb projects. I look forward to further grant success from Institute researchers in future rounds."

[ENDS]

Images:

Professor Christopher Semsarian AM:

<https://tinyurl.com/y6xswkx2>

Associate Professor Anthony Don:

<https://tinyurl.com/yytlppjx>

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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 www.centenary.org.au