

November 2016

# MEDIA RELEASE



## Rising stars in pioneering health research celebrated

### Bupa Health Foundation announces Emerging Health Research Award 2016 winner

Making inroads in closing the gap in Indigenous health is at the heart of Gail Garvey's research commitment.

Associate Professor Garvey was announced as the winner of the Bupa Health Foundation Emerging Health Researcher Award last night at the Research Australia Awards dinner.

She will receive \$25,000 to further her research to improve cancer treatment for Indigenous Australians.

"My research is focused on cancer and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and I'm doing that because cancer has impacted on my family and my community and it's an important issue that requires addressing," said Assoc. Prof. Garvey.

"My research involves looking at Indigenous people's participation in prevention strategies such as cancer screenings and investigating the support needs of Indigenous cancer patients and how that can impact on their uptake of services."

Bupa Health Foundation Executive Leader, Annette Schmiede, said a record number of nominations were submitted this year.

"There were many outstanding researchers so choosing the finalists was rather a daunting task. Our finalists are a very special group and I congratulate each of them and look forward to watching their careers' progress," said Ms Schmiede.

"Our 2016 Emerging Researcher Awards finalists have already made significant contributions that have been recognized at home and globally."

"Early career researchers often work in an uncertain environment and the Bupa Health Foundation's funding helps to provide additional financial support."

"We want to keep encouraging our Australian researchers to think big and make breakthroughs that can improve the health of all Australians. Supporting and funding emerging researchers is vital to our research sector remaining a leader and globally competitive."

Along with the winner's grant, the other four finalists were each awarded \$5,000 to continue their research in clinical and translational science. Another five shortlisted researchers will receive \$1000 to use towards their research career.

The Bupa Health Foundation is one of the country's leading private charitable organisations dedicated to health. The Foundation has invested almost \$30 million since its establishment in 2005 to support over 100 projects to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians.

The Bupa Health Foundation is listed on the Australian Competitive Grants Register. For more information, go to: [www.bupa.com.au/foundation](http://www.bupa.com.au/foundation).

***Details on research projects over the page***



## **Bupa Health Foundation Emerging Health Researcher Award 2016 finalists**

### **Associate Prof. Gail Garvey – winner**

Menzies School of Health Research

Area of research: Improving cancer treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Nominator: Professor Joan Cunningham, Senior Principal Research Fellow, Menzies School of Health Research

Associate Prof. Gail Garvey is an Aboriginal research leader based in Brisbane, whose research is committed to closing the gap through improvements in cancer treatment for Indigenous Australians. Her project aims to reduce deaths from cancer through earlier detection and appropriate treatment, as well as improving overall quality of life for Indigenous people with cancer by reducing their unmet needs. An emerging leader in this field, Associate Professor Garvey's early achievements include pioneering a tool to assist with measuring the supportive care needs of Indigenous cancer patients, which is now being used across Australia.

### **Dr Laura Dagley – finalist**

The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research

Area of research: Innovating more accurate ways to identify acute rheumatic fever in Aboriginal children

Nominator: Dr. Andrew Webb, Laboratory Head, Proteomics, Systems Biology and Personalised Medicine Division at The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research

When acute rheumatic fever (ARF) is left untreated, it can lead to rheumatic heart disease (RHD), with disease-affected children often requiring multiple open-heart surgeries over their lifetime. ARF and RHD remains disproportionately high in Indigenous communities where Aboriginal people are nearly 20 times more likely to die from RHD than other Australians. This project aims to combat a clear need, with diagnosis of ARF changing little over the last 50 years. Dr Dagley has helped to innovate more accurate ways to identify ARF in Indigenous children. This new test identifies certain diagnostic markers circulating within the blood and will be available to clinics, therefore having the potential to reduce instances of RHD and its burden on Indigenous communities and our health system.

### **Dr Johana Paola Tello Velasquez – finalist**

Eskitis Institute for Drug Discovery, Griffith University

Area of research: Preparation for a large-scale trial that aims to repair spinal cord injury following recent successful restoration of partial function in a human

Nominator: Dr James St John, Head of the Clem Jones Centre for Neurobiology and Stem Cell Research, Griffith University

Dr Johana Paola Tello Velasquez is an emerging innovator in neuroscience who is preparing for an upcoming trial that aims to repair spinal cord injuries; a devastating condition that currently has no effective treatment. With around 12,000 Australians currently living with spinal cord injury, the total economic cost in Australia is estimated to be \$2 billion annually. The upcoming trial follows recent exciting results – including the successful restoration of partial function in a human – that indicate the researchers are on the verge of a life-changing discovery. The trial will involve transplanting olfactory ensheathing cells taken from a patient's nose into their injured spinal cord, to promote repair and regeneration. Dr Velasquez will provide intellectual input in preparation for the clinical trial as part of a large team of experts.



**Dr Emily Reeve – finalist**

Kolling Institute, Royal North Shore Hospital

Area of research: Guidelines to withdraw low-value medication for people with dementia

Nominator: Professor Sarah Hilmer, Head of Department of Clinical Pharmacology, University of Sydney

Dr Reeve’s research focuses on deprescribing (withdrawing) medications that are high risk or unnecessary, where the risks of taking the medicine(s) outweigh the benefits for people with dementia. Deprescribing is a neglected and under-researched area, despite its impact in improving health outcomes and reducing financial costs from low-value health care. Dr Reeve’s current project will develop and implement deprescribing guidelines for people with dementia, which is important for our ageing population. She is already an emerging leader in this area, having developed the world’s first questionnaire to understand patients’ attitudes to deprescribing and developed this further to understand attitudes of carers of older people. It has been adopted across Australia, in Europe and in North America.

**Dr Joseph Doyle – finalist**

Department of Infectious Diseases, The Alfred and Monash University

Area of research: Improving Hepatitis C treatment in highly vulnerable patients to ultimately eradicate the disease in Australia

Nominator: Professor Anton Peleg, Director, Department of Infectious Diseases, Alfred Health and Monash University

Dr Doyle’s research aims to improve hepatitis C treatment for vulnerable populations and ultimately eliminate it as a public health problem in Australia. His projects focus on delivering hepatitis C treatment to vulnerable people, with nearly 800 people in the community so far receiving care. He has achieved this through innovative models of care, with a focus on greater support services in community settings. Dr Doyle shares his expertise as an advisor to the World Health Organisation and plays a significant role in the Elimination of Hepatitis C Partnership, which is among the first programs set up to eliminate viral hepatitis globally. Improved health of people with hepatitis C, and reduced transmission rates due to effective treatment regimes, indicate that it may be possible to eliminate hepatitis C.

Due to the high calibre of this year’s nominees, an additional ‘Commendation Award’ category has been included this year. Five nominees who were shortlisted but not selected as finalists will receive \$1000 to use towards their research career:

- Dr Quan Huynh, Baker IDI Heart & Diabetes Institute. Prediction and prevention of heart failure readmission
- Dr Ruth Webster, The George Institute for Global Health. Reducing heart attacks and stroke by innovative use of cardiovascular preventive medications
- Dr Andrew Gardner, Hunter New England Local Health District. Sports concussion and neurotrauma
- Dr Jocelyn Bowden, University of Sydney, Sydney Medical School. Optimising primary care management of knee osteoarthritis: the PARTNER project
- Dr Katy Bell, University of Sydney/ Sydney School of Public Health. How are tests driving over diagnosis, overtreatment and over servicing of patients with chronic disease and what can be done about it?

**For more information please visit [www.bupa.com.au/foundation](http://www.bupa.com.au/foundation). For media enquiries or further information please contact:**

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