

Saturday 15 October

Highest award for ground-breaking research into severe Malaria

Dr Tsin Yeo from the Menzies School of Health Research won the Tropical Knowledge Research Award as well as the overall Chief Minister's Northern Territory Research and Innovation Award, while Dr Kylie Dingwall and Dr Annette Dougall were nominated in the top three finalists for the NT Young Tall Poppy Award at last night's Research and Innovation Awards.

Dr Tsin Yeo was recognised for his ground-breaking work into improving the recognition, understanding and treatment of severe malaria.

Director of Menzies School of Health Research Professor Jonathan Carapetis congratulated Dr Yeo.

"Dr Yeo has made major new discoveries into how the malaria parasite causes severe and fatal malaria, with it turning off the body's ability to make a protective molecule nitric oxide.

"This information has been used to design a new treatment that Dr Yeo and his colleagues are testing for severe malaria.

"This new treatment, L-arginine is a natural product that increases nitric oxide and allows improved blood flow in the body.

"Without enough nitric oxide the blood vessels become very sticky allowing the malaria parasite to block blood vessels and prevent blood flow to vital organs.

"Dr Yeo is now testing this in treatment trials at Menzies field sites in Asia, where Malaria remains a huge public health problem," Professor Carapetis said.

The Young Tall Poppy Scientist Awards celebrates young researchers who demonstrate scientific excellence as well as an ability to communicate their research to the community. Dr Dingwall was nominated for her research into substance abuse in Indigenous communities and Dr Dougall for her work on the parasite Leishmania, which causes significant diseases in humans and other animals.

Professor Carapetis said both researchers are exceptional academics and have made outstanding achievements working in their scientific fields.

"Working independently in a remote outpost in Alice Springs, offsite from her supervisor and her organisation, Dr Dingwall's findings into substance abuse in remote communities, including alcohol and petrol abuse have a direct influence on policy and health care practice in the Northern Territory.

"While Dr Dougall continues to demonstrate the qualities of a high-calibre researcher, she is part of the Leishmania project team that won last year's Chief Minister's Research and Innovation Award for their work in identifying the insect that spreads the parasite Leishmania in Australia," Professor Carapetis said.

The Research and Innovation Awards are presented on the recommendations of the NT Research and Innovation Board, an independent advisory board appointed by the Chief Minister.

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