

Research turns to cold case specimens to unveil secrets in ear and lung health

Tuesday, 12 November 2013

A retrospective study of 20 years of ear and lung data is being undertaken to inform improved diagnosis, prevention and treatment options for Indigenous children with middle ear and lung infections.

Senior research fellow at the Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies), Kim Hare, has recently been awarded a prestigious Peter Doherty Australian Biomedical Fellowship by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) as part of their latest round of funding.

The fellowship funds Ms Hare for four years to collectively analyse the many individual studies conducted by Menzies' child health researchers over the past 20 years.

"Although the primary outcomes of these individual studies have been, or are being, published, much additional valuable information remains to be discovered," Ms Hare said.

"I will use my fellowship funds to combine data from the different studies, which will increase the numbers for analysis and enable me to examine interactions between antibiotics, vaccines and the environment, something that is not generally possible in individual studies.

"My research will add value to the original studies which were undertaken at considerable expense and involved an enormous amount of work."

Menzies' unique collection of thousands of microbiological samples has been ultra-frozen for up to 20 years. Using some of the latest DNA techniques, and with appropriate informed consent, analyses can be performed that were not possible when the samples were initially collected.

Ms Hare's research may identify new questions that can now be answered using these techniques.

"We are in a unique position nationally and globally because we have access to these data and samples from Indigenous Australians in accordance with required ethics approval," Ms Hare said.

"This fellowship means that the contributions made by researchers and participants in the past can continue to add to the knowledge base of otitis media and lung infections in the NT."

The NHMRC Peter Doherty Australian Biomedical Fellowship recognises outstanding health and medical researchers and provides a vehicle for full time research within the biomedical sciences.

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Menzies Background

Menzies School of Health Research is Australia's only Medical Research Institute dedicated to improving Indigenous health and wellbeing. We have a 28-year history of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies works at the frontline, partnering with over 60 Indigenous communities across Northern and Central Australia. We collaborate to create resources, grow local skills and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.