

19 November 2015

2015 Emerging Health Researcher Award winner announced

Bupa Health Foundation celebrates the bright future of health research

An inspiring health researcher working to identify ways to improve health outcomes in Indigenous communities has been named the Bupa Health Foundation Emerging Health Researcher of the Year.

Dr Gabrielle McCallum, an early-career clinical researcher from the Menzies School of Health Research, received the 2015 Bupa Health Foundation Emerging Health Researcher Award in recognition of her work to find ways to provide early treatment, and prevent recurring lung infections and lung damage, in Indigenous children.

"In the Northern Territory, we face among the highest rates of respiratory disease in the world with our Indigenous children and I'm really passionate about finding different ways to treat and help manage these lung conditions so we can prevent this for generations to come," said Dr McCallum.

"The support of the Bupa Health Foundation will help me improve the future lung health and quality of life among Australian Indigenous children, and broaden our understanding of clinical factors impacting the management of acute and chronic respiratory illness."

The Foundation also recognised four finalists for the following projects*:

- Evaluating the effectiveness of financial incentives for patients to promote the cost-effective use of medicines and improve medication adherence;
- Optimising the management of people with atrial fibrillation to improve health outcomes;
- Improving the implementation of evidence-based primary health care for vulnerable population groups;
- Finding new ways to beat blood cancers, including acute myeloid leukaemia (AML).

First held in 2012, the Award celebrates gifted early-career health researchers committed to improving health and care outcomes of Australians in the near future.

Bupa Health Foundation Executive Leader Annette Schmiede said the Award supports the bright future of Australia's health researchers, and recognises the tangible benefits they bring to the community.

"The Emerging Health Researcher Award is about supporting the determination of these incredible researchers to convert their findings into improving the delivery and efficiency of our health system," said Ms Schmiede.

"Year on year, our winner and finalists demonstrate that early career achievement can be of world class importance. Supporting this translational focus is at the heart of the Foundation's philosophy, and I congratulate Dr McCallum and our 2015 finalists."

Dr McCallum was awarded \$25,000 towards furthering her research career, while the other four finalists each received \$5,000.

The Bupa Health Foundation 2015 Emerging Health Researcher Award winner and finalists were announced at the official Awards Ceremony on 18 November 2015

Since its establishment in 2005, the Bupa Health Foundation has supported more than 100 initiatives nationally, focused on translating Australian research into real health and care improvements.

More information about the Bupa Health Foundation 2015 Emerging Health Researcher Awards can be found at www.bupa.com.au/foundation.

***Note to editors: See next page for details about the winner and finalists of the Bupa Health Foundation 2015 Emerging Health Researcher Awards.**



Bupa Health Foundation 2015 Emerging Health Researcher Award recipients

Winner: Dr Gabrielle McCallum, Menzies School of Health Research

Nominator: *Professor Anne Chang, Child Health Division Leader, Menzies School of Health Research*

Area of research: *Identifying interventional targets to improve lung health and management of respiratory disease in Indigenous children, through long term follow-up studies*

Dr McCallum is an early-career clinical researcher in the Northern Territory. Her project aims to identify ways to provide early treatment, and prevent recurring lung infections and lung damage, in Indigenous children. The burden of ill health from respiratory disease remains high among the Indigenous population, with those living in the Northern Territory 5-times more likely to be hospitalised with ongoing lung infections and lung damage compared with non-Indigenous children. For the first time, the research will identify ways to optimise clinical care, improve long-term respiratory outcomes and broaden the understanding of the clinical factors impacting lung health in this population.

Finalist: Dr Tracey-Lea Laba, The George Institute for Global Health

Nominator: *Professor Stephen Jan, Head, Health Economics and Process Evaluation Program, Professor, Sydney Medical School, University of Sydney and NHMRC Senior Research Fellow*

Area of research: *Evaluating the effectiveness of patient-directed financial incentives to promote the cost-effective use of medicines in practice*

Medication non-adherence is a major contributor to the high burden of long-term illness worldwide. This project will investigate using financial incentives directed at patients, to promote the cost-effective use of medicines in practice. Dr Laba leads a program of research that promotes decision-making and investment by policy-makers and healthcare providers, and is designed to test a broad range of affordable, patient-focused and evidence-based solutions to the problem of medication non-adherence.

Finalist: Dr Jocasta Ball, Mary MacKillop Institute for Health Research, Australian Catholic University

Nominator: *Professor Simon Stewart, Director, Mary MacKillop Institute for Health Research*

Area of research: *Risk stratification to optimise the management of patients with atrial fibrillation and improve health outcomes*

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is the most common irregular heartbeat observed in clinical practice, and is closely linked to stroke and heart failure. Dr Ball recently published findings in the prestigious medical journal *The Lancet* that demonstrated the potential of an AF-specific, nurse-led model of care. She is now focused on identifying new ways to assess at-risk patients and individualise their management, to reduce hospitalisations, and improve the health and quality of life of Australians living with this condition.

Finalist: Associate Professor Steven Lane, QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute

Nominator: *Professor Frank Gannon, Director, QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute*

Area of research: *Finding new ways to beat blood cancers, including acute myeloid leukaemia (AML)*

Dr Lane is an early-career medical researcher and clinical haematologist driven to find new ways to beat blood cancers including acute myeloid leukaemia (AML). Despite most patients responding to chemotherapy, survival rates in AML remain low because the disease invariably comes back (relapses) after treatment. There is an urgent, unmet clinical need for new treatments that prevent this relapse. His work has identified a new way of targeting and destroying the cells within the leukaemia that give rise to relapse. It is hoped that this work will lead to new clinical trials and treatments for patients with AML, and potentially many other cancers.

Finalist: Dr Karen Gardner, Centre for Primary Health Care and Equity University of New South Wales

Nominator: *Professor Mark Harris, Scientia Professor and Executive Director Centre for Primary Health Care and Equity and Director of COMPARE-PHC (Centre for Obesity Management and Prevention Research Excellence in Primary Health Care)*

Area of research: *Improving implementation of evidence based primary health care*

This project is focused on addressing the barriers to implementing primary health care programs. This includes designing and testing new approaches in order to improve quality and reduce variations in health outcomes between programs in different settings. Dr Gardner's research specialises in three areas: the quality and performance of primary healthcare; increasing the evidence base for quality improvement programs particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; and evaluating implementation of complex interventions.



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The Bupa Health Foundation is one of Australia's leading corporate foundations dedicated to health. We are committed to improving the health of the Australian community and ensuring the sustainability of affordable healthcare through collaborative partnerships. Celebrating its 10th year, the Foundation has supported more than 100 projects, focused on translating Australian research into real health and care improvements. www.bupa.com.au/foundation.