

HOT NORTH Fellowships to improve health outcomes in the tropics

20 March, 2017

Five post-doctoral health professionals have been awarded Fellowships to help close critical gaps in health outcomes in northern Australia and the Asia-Pacific region as part of the unique collaborative program *Improving Health Outcomes in the Tropical North (HOT NORTH)*, led by the Darwin-based Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies).

The career fellowships are an integral component of the HOT NORTH program, which aims to develop a new generation of northern researchers to help to close the gap in Indigenous health disadvantage, provide new evidence to combat tropical diseases and prepare and protect the north from emerging infectious threats. HOT NORTH has five themes, with one Fellow appointed to each; skin health, respiratory health, chronic diseases, antimicrobial resistance and emerging threats and diseases transmitted by mosquitoes.

Chief investigator and team leader for *Tropical and Emerging Infectious Diseases* at Menzies, Professor Bart Currie welcomed the appointments as the first step in achieving the goals of HOT NORTH.

'For those health professionals with a passion for clinical or laboratory sciences research, central and northern Australia is undoubtedly the most exciting and challenging part of Australia to work in.

'The metro-centric nature of our academic and funding systems has for many years worked against us attracting and retaining a critical mass of clinicians and researchers to address all the challenges.

'The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) have now provided us with the opportunity to turn this around and we are really excited to be able to support these five Fellows and their diverse projects,' Prof Currie said.

Another five Fellows will be appointed for each of the next three years as the HOT NORTH program continues to encourage stellar young researchers to move north.

'By building the capacity of health professionals and scientists in northern Australia over the next four years we will see improvements in health outcomes not only for Australia, but also the Asia-Pacific region,' Prof Currie said.

The inaugural Career Fellows are:

- **Dr Matthew Grigg, Menzies School of Health Research**
Project title: Antimicrobial Resistance - Epidemiology and treatment of malaria in Sabah, Malaysia: longitudinal patterns of disease, acquisition risk factors, antimalarial drug resistance, and adjunctive therapy for acute kidney injury
- **Associate Professor Heidi Smith-Vaughan, Menzies School of Health Research**
Project title: Respiratory Health - Genomic Public Health in Australian Indigenous Communities and Developing Countries
- **Dr Karla Canuto, James Cook University**
Project title: Chronic Diseases - Torres Strait Healthy Young Women's Project

- **Dr Dagmar Meyer, James Cook University**
Project title: Vector Borne and Emerging Infectious Diseases - Can mosquito excreta be used to enhance detection of Australian vector-borne diseases?
- **Dr Timothy Barnett, Telethon Kids Institute**
Project title: Skin Health - Do Group A Streptococcus isolates causing skin infections in remote WA encode genes that correlate with disease severity, antibiotic resistance, or adverse immunological outcomes?

HOT NORTH is funded as part of the Australian Government's Northern Australia Tropical Disease Collaborative Research Programme derived from policies outlined in the White Paper, Developing Northern Australia.

Improving Health Outcomes in the Tropical North: A Multidisciplinary Collaboration (HOT NORTH) participating institutions:

- Menzies School of Health Research, Charles Darwin University
- Telethon Kids Institute
- James Cook University
- The Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity, The University of Melbourne and The Royal Melbourne Hospital
- Marie Bashir Institute, The University of Sydney
- Burnet Institute
- South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute
- QIMR Berghofer

- ENDS -

Media contact:

Paul Dale, senior communications officer

Phone: 0439 108 754 or (08) 8946 8658 | Email: communications@menzies.edu.au

Menzies School of Health Research

Menzies School of Health Research is one of Australia's leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving Indigenous, global and tropical health. Menzies has a history of over 30 years of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies works at the frontline, joining with partners across the Asia-Pacific as well as Indigenous communities across northern and central Australia. Menzies collaborates to create new knowledge, grow local skills and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.