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Media Release

Leading Indigenous Health Researcher honoured with Frank Fenner Award

Associate Professor Steven Tong, Infectious Diseases Physician at the Royal Melbourne Hospital and Indigenous Health Theme Leader at the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity (Doherty Institute), has been awarded the 2017 Frank Fenner Award for Advanced Research in Infectious Diseases.

The award was presented on 31 March 2017 at the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases (ASID) Annual Scientific Meeting and holds the highest distinction of the society's awards.

ASID President Professor Cheryl Jones applauded A/Prof Tong's impressive research on conditions affecting Indigenous Australians, including susceptibility to influenza and rheumatic heart disease, treatment of skin sores in Indigenous children, and the epidemiology of sexually transmitted diseases including hepatitis B and chlamydia.

"Steven's extensive contributions in infectious diseases are highly commended and demonstrate a great commitment towards the advancement of Indigenous health. He is an exceptional role model for the next generation of infectious diseases clinical researchers," said Prof Jones.

A/Prof Tong was also praised for establishing and leading collaborations on *Staphylococcus aureus* (golden staph) infections. This research led to the formal naming of two new staphylococcal species, one found mainly in Aboriginal populations in northern Australia; and novel treatment trials for *Staphylococcus aureus* bloodstream infections.

"Steve is a superb recipient of the 2017 Frank Fenner Award. Not only is he a leading researcher, he is also a fantastic clinician, a great communicator and passionate about community engagement, specifically Indigenous communities. This award recognises the extraordinary contribution of clinician-led collaborative research to improving health outcomes," University of Melbourne Professor Sharon Lewin, Doherty Institute Director said.

Accepting the award, A/Prof Tong paid tribute to his research teams and emphasised the importance of collaboration.

"This research is only possible through working closely with Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues. I'm inspired about the Australasian infectious diseases community growing in its ability as a collaborative research group, to address important local and global infectious diseases issues into the future," A/Prof Tong said.

A/Prof Tong joined the Doherty Institute in 2016, as co-lead of Indigenous Health and Clinical and Translational Research and as a consultant infectious diseases physician at the Royal Melbourne



A joint venture between The University of Melbourne and The Royal Melbourne Hospital



Hospital. For the past 10 years he has worked in the Northern Territory with the Menzies School of Health Research where he continues to hold a position, leading research projects. He is the co-lead of an international multi-centre clinical trial hoping to revolutionise the treatment of *Staphylococcus aureus* bloodstream infections, and is Deputy Chair of the ASID Clinical Research Network.

A/Prof Tong has 89 peer-reviewed publications and was the recipient of the Charles Darwin University Vice Chancellor's Early Career Researcher Award in 2013.

The Frank Fenner Award is named in honour of Professor Frank Fenner, an Australian pioneer of viral research. Prof Fenner played a central part in the global eradication of smallpox, chairing the World Health Organization Global Commission for the Certification of Smallpox Eradication. Prof Fenner was an active member of ASID, and was the patron of the society from 2000 until his death in late 2010, aged 95.

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INTERVIEWS AND PHOTOS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

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About the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases (ASID)

The Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases is the peak professional body for infectious diseases and microbiology in the region. Membership encompasses Infectious Diseases Physicians, Clinical Microbiologists, Scientists, Infection Control Practitioners, Public Health Physicians, Sexual Health Physicians, Veterinarians and others eminent in the field of infectious diseases.

About the ASID Annual Scientific Meeting

The ASID Annual Scientific Meeting is the leading Australasian meeting for adult and paediatric infectious disease and clinical microbiology specialists. The conference is an ideal opportunity for connecting clinicians, microbiologists and other health professions with a common interest in infectious diseases, and provides a friendly forum for the exchange of scientific advances in the prevention, diagnosis and management of clinical infectious diseases. International speakers offer expert global perspectives, and Australasian research and expertise is highlighted with keynote lectures, proffered papers, symposia and educational workshops.