

## MEDIA RELEASE

# RHH Research Foundation announces grant recipients for Tasmanian health research in 2014

The Royal Hobart Hospital Research Foundation today announced details of its first round of annual grant funding for 2014, providing seven new starter grants and six new clinical grants for local medical research to be undertaken in Tasmania over the course of the year.

The Research Foundation's Chair, Mr David Catchpole, explained "the purpose of these grants is to assist emerging and highly skilled clinical researchers to collaborate with each other for the benefit of the local community".

"Over its sixteen years of grant funding, the Foundation has focused strongly upon supporting research into medical conditions and approaches to healthcare that are of particular relevance to the Tasmanian community, investing over \$6m to support projects undertaken by local clinicians," Mr Catchpole said.

After an intensely competitive selection process, the range of projects chosen for funding offers a broad scope of intended benefit for the wellbeing of many Tasmanians, with potential that is even more far-reaching.

For example, the Foundation will support a research team guided by Dr Kristen Hynes, investigating the importance of iodine during pregnancy and childhood in Tasmanians. This funding builds upon earlier grant provided by the Tasmania Community Fund, enabling further data-collection and iodine analysis of pregnant and breastfeeding mothers in Tasmania.

"It is anticipated that findings will lead to a better understanding of the current level of knowledge, among Tasmanian women, about the importance of adequate iodine nutrition during pregnancy and breast feeding. This will have important implications for the management of women attending antenatal services in the Royal Hobart Hospital as well as for the long-term health of the Tasmanian community in general.

"The findings of this study may provide evidence in support of a public intervention to address iodine deficiency during pregnancy in Tasmania", Dr Hynes said.

Chief Executive Officer Heather Francis emphasised that research supported by the RHH Research Foundation is selected via a rigorous assessment process undertaken by the Foundation's scientific research advisory panel, which is endorsed by the NH&MRC.

"Facing a highly competitive field of applications from interested clinicians, only projects and researchers of excellence can be selected to pursue their investigations. Even then, in every funding round we are overwhelmed with applications from a community of eager researchers based within the RHH. This demonstrates a need for continuing and increased support from across our general and business communities for this vital work," she said.

“On this occasion, the Research Foundation has been oversubscribed by researchers’ applications that amounted to more than five times above the funds available. There were many excellent projects submitted which, had funding been available, would have been considered further.

“There’s great scope for additional investment in high quality local health and medical research and this is something the RHH Research Foundation aims to achieve with the community’s support through our fundraising initiatives,” she said.

As a completely independent entity, the RHH Research Foundation provides an important role in supporting specialist doctors, nurses and allied health professionals with research interests through its annual grants program. With a strong emphasis on collaboration, this latest round of funding includes researchers from the RHH, and various areas of the University of Tasmania including the Menzies Research Institute.

“In total, the Foundation has budgeted almost \$600,000 to support local health and medical research through grant funding in 2014,” highlighted Ms Francis. “It is anticipated that a further call for project grant applications will be undertaken in coming months,” she said.

*-Ends-*

**For more info:** CEO Heather Francis 0407 201 113

**Interview available:** CEO RHH Research Foundation Heather Francis and Dr Kristen Hynes  
10.00am, Thursday 20 March 2013  
Dunn Place car park, Hobart

**Future Media Event:** RHH Research Foundation’s Research Excellence Dinner on 25 July 2014.

## **RHH Research Foundation Research Grant Recipients - 2014**

### **New Starter grants for 2014**

Bariatric surgery in Tasmanian public hospitals: investigating health service use, costs, and policy options. *Professor Alison Venn.*

Novel Molecules of Heparin for the management of asthma. *Dr Cameron Hunter.*

Making it Count: Growing together Perinatal Intervention to Foster Secure Relationships of Infants with Teenage Mothers and Fathers in Southern Tasmania. *Dr Fiona Wagg.*

Examination of the mechanism of action of two pre-quit pharmacotherapies for smoking cessation. *Dr Stuart Ferguson.*

Mechanistic studies of Jack Jumper Venom desensitisation at the T cell level. *Dr Bruce Lyons.*

Dementia-related presentations at the Royal Hobart Hospital - A pilot program for redesigning statewide clinical care pathways involving Tasmanian residential aged care facilities (RACFs). *Dr Michael Annear.*

Assessing the validity of non-invasive methods to estimate central blood pressure (BP). *Dr Martin Schultz.*

### **New Clinical grants for 2014**

Tasmanian Iodine Nutrition Collaboration (TasINC) Capacity Building Grant. *Dr Kristen Hynes.*

Epithelial mesenchymal transition (EMT) in the lungs of patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and lung cancer undergoing thoracotomy: role in both airway fibrosis and lung cancer. *Dr Sukhwinder Sohal.*

Making it count: Establishment of the Conception to Community Public Services Database. *Dr Amanda Neil.*

Executive functioning and everyday performance in early school age children born less than 32 weeks gestation STAGE 2. *Mrs Sari O'Meagher.*

The relationship between Immunoglobulin E (IgE), disease severity and the immune response in multiple sclerosis. *Professor Bruce Taylor.*

Microvascular dysfunction in adult offspring of type 2 diabetics. *Dr Michelle Keske.*