22 August 2019

**Heart health, safer swallowing and treating AIDS in Africa – Flinders’ NHMRC 2019 grants**

Research to reduce the risk of repeat heart attacks amongst country people is the focus of a wide-ranging partnership project which has been awarded $1.35m in Partnership funding by the NHMRC.

Called CHAP (Country Heart Attack Prevention) the project headed by Professor Robyn Clark aims to boost the rate of Cardiac Rehabilitation in rural and remote areas, with statistics showing only 20-50% of patients attend rehabilitation – a figure that hasn’t budged in 20 years.

Leading a team of 9 other chief investigators and 6 associate investigators, supported by 11 partners contributing an additional $1.89m, Professor Clark’s aim is to engage clinicians to recommend Cardiac Rehabilitation, develop an auto referral system, provide a range of delivery methods from in person to apps, and improve long term support for heart health.

“When face to face support is difficult, new technologies have huge potential to improve health in distant regions; the challenge is supporting clinicians, their patients and carers to understand the options and access heart rehab through the increasing range of telehealth, apps, avatars, and web based services“ Professor Clark says.

The CHAP project heads some $2.1million in NHMRC funding awarded to Flinders University researchers in the current round.

Dr Hailay Gesesew has been awarded $639,750 as an Emerging Leader Investigator to assess the use and effectiveness of a new HIV care and treatment approach about to be implemented in Ethiopia as it endeavours to meet United Nations targets for the diagnosis, treatment and suppression of HIV/AIDS.

Called the teach-test-link-trace model, it ‘counsels’ and ‘tests’ people via new self-HIV testing program and house-to-house HIV testing, and then ‘links’ patients to health care services. It also ‘traces’ the “lost-to-follow-up”

patients after engaging in HIV care. Dr Gesesew’s project will look at whether the new approach achieves the UNAIDS goals.

Professor Taher Omari has been awarded $146,783 – adding an additional year to his existing Research Fellowship – to better diagnose dysphagia, or problems with swallowing, a condition that affects an estimated 1 million Australians at any given time.

Swallowing disorders can have many causes including stroke, cancer and many other common diseases, and can result in death from aspiration pneumonia or choking. Robust diagnosis is central to providing better treatment and improving the health outcomes for patients.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Robert Saint congratulated the researchers on their awards.

“This is important work that has the potential to help people lead happier healthier lives, be they a heart attack patient in the outback who can avoid a repeat episode, someone whose ability to swallow could jeopardise their life, or an AIDS patient in Ethiopia whose successful diagnosis and treatment can inform better models of care in the future.

“Flinders is pleased to be making a difference in these very meaningful areas of research in Australia and globally, and we have committed an additional $100m investment in research over the next five years to elevate the impact and reach of our work” Professor Saint says.

**Additional information**

**2018 Partnership Projects PRC3 funding commencing 2019**

Application Title: The Country Heart Attack Prevention (CHAP) Project: A four step model of care and clinical pathway for the translation of cardiac rehabilitation and secondary prevention guidelines into practice for rural and remote patients.

Awarded: $1,353,113.25

Chief Investigators: Professor Robyn Clark (Flinders University College of Nursing and Health Sciences) with:

Professor Stephen Nicholls (South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute), Professor Alex Brown South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute), Professor Derek Chew (Flinders University), Professor John Beltrame (The University of Adelaide), Professor Anthony Maeder (Flinders University), Associate Professor Carol Maher (University of South Australia), Associate Professor Vincent Versace (Deakin University), Dr Jeroen Hendriks (The University of Adelaide), Dr Philip Tideman (Southern Adelaide Local Health Network)

Project Partners: SA Health, Country Health SA, Country Primary Health Network, Heart Foundation, AstraZeneca, Novartis, Flinders Foundation, the Cardiac Society of Australia & New Zealand, Royal Australian College of General Practice, Australian Cardiac Rehabilitation Association and Exercise Scientists Society of Australia.

**2019 Investigator Grants funding commencing 2020**

Application Title: Teach-Test-Link-Trace Model for the UNAIDS 90-90-90 Treatment Targets in Ethiopia:

Acceptability and Effectiveness study

Awarded: $639,750.00

Applicant: Dr Hailay Gesesew (Flinders University College of Medicine and Public Health)

Application Title: Modernisation of the Assessment of Swallowing Disorders to Achieve Better Diagnosis and

Treatments for Dysphagia across all Ages

Awarded: $146,783.00

Applicant: Professor Taher Omari (Flinders University College of Medicine and Public Health)

**Media contact**

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