

DISEASE WARRIOR WINS PRIZE

Melbourne medical researcher wins \$50,000 prize

Pioneering work on understanding the structure and function of DISEASE CAUSING MOLECULES

Melbourne medical research scientist **Professor James Whisstock** from the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Monash University is at the cutting edge of protease and related biology. His work is establishing new approaches to combat diseases affecting Australians as well as infectious diseases in south-east Asia.

Professor Whisstock has been recognized for this outstanding research and his remarkable track record by winning the coveted national award for research excellence - the Commonwealth Health Ministers Award for Excellence in Health and Medical Research. The award was judged by an independent panel of experts.

The award will be presented to Professor Whisstock at the ASMR Medical Research Week® Gala dinner tonight in Melbourne.

Professor Whisstock's work using X-ray crystallography and Bioinformatics has focused on understanding how proteins control medically important processes such as *blood coagulation, neurotransmission and the immune response to bacterial and viral infection.*

Recent findings suggest that key human immune defence molecules belong to an ancient family of toxins deployed by bacteria to destroy tissue. **Mutations in these molecules stop them from working and release the demon within. This data provides an attack route to control the unwanted activity in transplant rejection and diabetes.**

The translational outcomes flowing from this research will be of major benefit to the Australian economy, in terms of improved health and direct impact on the biotechnology industry

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