

**ASMR QUEENSLAND POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL RESEARCH STUDENT CONFERENCE
May 23 2007, Wesley Hospital Auditorium**

QUEENSLAND... SUNNY AND SMART!

The Annual Postgrad Medical Research Student Conference attracts Qld's best and brightest

Chronic Parasitic Disease caused by worms....

Young Qld. researchers may be leading the way to overcome a chronic parasitic disease affecting over 200 million people in tropical and developing countries. The worm '*Schistosoma mansoni*' infects humans via contaminated water. Reports of resistance to the one drug available to treat this condition are emerging..! Insight into the cellular biology of the parasite will identify new targets for vaccine or drug treatments.

This research has an increasing urgency as Australia and the world face accelerated global warming.

A number of researchers at QIMR are working on this problem. A Glanfield is identifying molecules and pathways for iron uptake and homeostasis in the worm and M K Ellis also from QIMR is looking at the acute infection sometimes associated with the condition and ways of identifying people most likely to be susceptible to acute reaction. **Even a 1% reduction in this chronic disease will have a impact on the health of vast numbers of the world population!**

Are current Glaucoma tests outdated?

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness worldwide! D J Holcombe from the University of Queensland thinks that current vision field tests used to detect human glaucoma may be inappropriate for detecting early vision deficits associated with the disease.

Best breathing for Premmie Babes

Does body position affect breathing pattern in extremely preterm infants... J Hough, from the University of Queensland has found that head position and not body position has more effect on breathing pattern. These findings have a major impact on how preterm infants need to be positioned for best respiratory outcome.

Schizophrenia and Vitamin D – James Kesby, University of Queensland

Vitamin D has an important role in brain development and prenatal vitamin D deficiency is a candidate risk factor for schizophrenia.... should women be given vitamin D supplementation in addition to folate and iron?

Predicting posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

PTSD resulting from childbirth is relatively new... some women perceive birth as traumatic and develop PTSD – why does this happen? Are there predictors?

On the Nose! Are you depressed, anxious, lost your sex drive?

You may be suffering from chronic stress! For centuries odours derived from plants have been used in aromatherapy for relieving stress, anxiety and depression – most of the evidence for these remedies is anecdotal with minimal evidence based research. This study (P T Choy, University of Queensland) has shown that using Praescent™ (a mixture of plant derived green odours) has moderated the effects of stress on mice. These results are an important step toward developing a novel therapeutic product to combat the effects of chronic stress and reduce the prevalence of stress related illnesses.

Media Contacts for interviews Marnie Nichols, 0403 501 627, Dr Emma Parkinson-Lawrence 0400 635 822
or Catherine West 0415 928 211 - ABSTRACTS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

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Queensland Premiers Awards for Health and Medical Research Postgraduate semi - finalists present their work at the Annual Conference

Snakes and adders... therapeutics from Australian snake venom – S Earl, QIMR

Australian snake venoms contain a myriad of proteins that together make up a toxic cocktail. However, individual proteins alone may have beneficial effects in the treatment of pain and wound healing...snake venom offers a new medium to be explored to source new medicines for mankind.

Some of the secrets to Williams Syndrome unlocked

Williams Syndrome affects approximately 1/20,000 people world-wide. Despite a number of missing genes being linked to the cause, their actual role is unknown. In a scientific first, A Ashe from the Queensland Institute of Medical Research has created a mouse that displays some of the facial abnormalities seen in people with Williams Syndrome. This mouse will be used to study and improve our understanding of the molecular basis of this disease.

A Signature may tell a Sunny Story- E Hacker, QIMR

Australia has the highest rate of melanoma in the world and sun exposure is a major risk factor for developing the disease. Findings have echoed those of epidemiologists that children exposed to sun have a greater risk of melanoma later in life. By comparing UV and non-UV induced tumours and tumours from sun exposure to the head or trunk, a genetic signature has been revealed which will aid in a better understanding of UV induced melanoma and improved treatments... including the development of post-sunburn applications.

Can a virus help treat a Fatal Disease?

Whilst the brain tumour, Glioblastoma Multiforme, is the most common of brain tumours successful treatment remains elusive. T Chuah and colleagues from the University of Queensland have successfully engineered a virus that has the ability to infect Glioblastoma multiforme tumor cells and change them from being radiation resistant to radiation sensitive. It is hoped that making tumour cells sensitive to radiation therapy, in combination with surgery, will provide a novel and exciting treatment strategy, increasing the survival rate of patients.

Ovarian Cancer-a new perspective - S Jordan, QIMR

Approximately 1500 women in Australia are diagnosed with ovarian cancer in each year. There are no effective early detection screening programs making prognosis poor. A comparison of risk factors suggests that pregnancy, breast feeding and taking the contraceptive pill protects against both fallopian tube and serous ovarian cancer but not peritoneal cancer; peritoneal cancer may develop along a different pathway. These findings may lead to the development of new screening methods for ovarian cancer.

Novel mechanism for growth hormone activation – R. Pelekanos, University of Queensland

Because of its size Growth Hormone is currently administered by injection. Current focus in drug discovery is to make a Growth Hormone-like drug that could be popped as a pill. A novel mechanism for Growth Hormone Receptor activation has been uncovered that will revolutionise the future design of Growth Hormone like drugs.

Finalists Profiles and Abstracts available online at <http://www.asmr.org.au/media/index.html>

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