

MEDIA RELEASE: EMBARGOED UNTIL 9PM FRIDAY JUNE 4

QUEENSLAND HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Winners of these prestigious awards announced at the ASMR Medical Research Week® Dinner

Clinical Researcher Category - Maher Gandhi (QIMR)

EBV-positive Diffuse Large B-cell Lymphoma (EBV+DLBCL) of the elderly is a distinct clinicobiological entity with poor outcomes following 'gold-standard' chemo-immunotherapy. Dr Maher's team demonstrate for the first time that EBV+DLBCL is a unique entity and observe that this lymphoma has novel biological features. The condition will be an increasing health burden as the population ages and this work puts Australia in the vanguard of an emerging field providing knowledge that will be fundamental to the design of new targeted therapies.

Senior Researcher Category – Richard Clark (IMB UQ)

The aim of this research is to develop potent and effective peptide-based drugs that are able to resist the body's natural degradation pathways so they can reach their biological target and act effectively.

Post-Doctoral Researcher Category - Kate Schroder (IMB UQ)

Mice are widely used as experimental models for humans in biomedical research. Since humans and mice diverged evolutionarily ~70 million years ago all such studies beg the question "can mice be trusted?". Kate Schroder and colleagues performed the first genome-wide systematic comparison of mouse and human gene regulation following immune system challenge and found that 23.9% of responses were not shared between the species. This study maps the strengths and weaknesses of the mouse model and identifies a cohort of human-specific responses as novel targets for the treatment of infectious and inflammatory diseases.

Post-graduate Student Category – Kimberley Jones (QIMR)

Post Transplant Lymphoproliferative Disorder (PTLD) is a lymphoma that arises as a side-effect of transplantation. Post-transplant patients take medications to suppress their immune systems to prevent them from rejecting the transplanted organ. Unfortunately this means that they are often unable to control the common Epstein-Barr virus (EBV). EBV is present within cancer cells in the majority of PTLD. In this study we show that PTLD patients can generate cells that target an EBV protein called EBNA1 and that these cells can kill malignant lymphoma cells. These EBNA1-specific T-cells could be included in vaccines for PTLD.

Runners-up

Clinical Researcher Category – David Copland, (UQCCR) - This work looks at treatments which can change how the the brain processes language, possibly identifying new ways to improve recovery of language after brain injury or disease.

Senior Researcher Category – Michelle Hill (Diamantina Institute UQ) Caveolin-1 is an enigmatic protein that has been associated with several types of cancers. It functions at cell surface cholesterol-rich microdomains in conjunction with proteins of the cavin family. These studies aim to find out how caveolin-1 leads to cancer progression.

Post-Doctoral Researcher Category – Manuel Ferreira (QIMR) Identifying genes for asthma through large-scale genetic studies

Post Graduate Student Category – Kate Markey (QIMR) Bone marrow transplantation (BMT) is the only available curative therapy for many blood cancers such as leukaemia. Graft-versus-host disease (GVHD) occurs after BMT and is a major cause of transplant-related death. GVHD occurs when white blood cells from the donor transplant attack recipient tissues. Kate's current research focuses on the immunology underlying GVHD to assist in design of new therapies to improve survival in patients undergoing BMT.

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