

Media Alert – June 26, 2007

Teams of young medical researchers visit regional Victorian schools June 26-27

**BAIRNSDALE, BALLARAT, BENALLA, BIRCHIP, COBRAM, GISBORNE, HORSHAM, NHILL,
ORBOST, SALE, SEBASTOPOL, STAWELL, WANGARATTA, WARRACKNABEAL**

17 young scientists visit regional schools in Victoria, urging students to consider a career in medical research. Inspired by teachers, television shows, disease experience and just plain curiosity, these dedicated researchers, will talk about their own work and the contribution it can make to the health and well being of all Australians.

Our speakers include:

Former **Wangaratta student, Dr Cathryn Hogarth** and **South Gippsland girl, Dr Sharyn Fitzgerald** returning to inspire others to pursue a career in medical research. Cathryn said, *"I was always interested in science but it was learning that my father had a rare genetic disorder that made me want to know more about how our genes influence our development and our health."* Dr Sharyn Fitzgerald from the Baker Research Institute is a lead investigator in a study of the long-term effects of stroke on physical and mental well-being.

Hsiu-Wen Chan – cell signaling in heart muscles. Hsiu-Wen has a personal reason for her research as her Father had a pacemaker fitted several years ago, she said *"I hope that if anything happens to him medically, my work will help him in some way"*

Hayley Dickinson – stem cell research. Hayley said, *"Stem cells offer the possibility of a treatment for debilitating diseases as they have the potential to replace damaged cells, organs and tissues"*.

Bill Li – researching the connection between genetics and heart disease. Bill said *"After open-heart surgery failed to cure my Mum's coronary heart disease I wanted to find new ways of treating such health problems"*

Carly Siebentritt – developing an HIV vaccine. Carly believes that *"Instead of giving a person a cocktail of drugs to fight their HIV virus we can give them a vaccine which helps their own immune system fight the virus and maybe even cure them"*

Alex Umers – studying new ways to treat malaria infection during pregnancy. Malaria kills two million mothers and their children every year. Alex said, *"By preventing the disease in mothers, we will reduce the risk of disease in the next generation. We are attacking malaria on a scientific and social scale"*.

Kane Tremble is a CSI fan turned medical researcher! Growing up with an avid interest in 'whodunits' and CSI thrillers, medical science was a natural progression. Now working on HIV/AIDS, Kane is hoping to inspire other CSI fans to consider medical research as a career. He said, *"In high school I realized medical research was the direction I would take – it was much better to try and keep people alive than working out their final moments"*.

Growing up in Myrtleford Ms Melanie Ivey was inspired by her high school science teachers to pursue a career in biological science. As an investigator of the process where 'bad' cholesterol sticks to blood vessels and blocks the arteries. Ivey is bringing this message home to local students

Dr Juliana Soosairajah fled ethnic war in Sri Lanka, migrating to Australia when she was a young adult. She obtained her scientific qualifications in Australia and now searches for better drugs for people who suffer from stroke and heart attack.

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Speaker profiles and other information <http://www.asmr.org.au/media/index.html>

High resolution photographs are available upon request.