

HRC success for AUT health researchers

AUTs health research received a \$2.5 million injection after a successful funding round from the Health Research Council (HRC).

Professor of Nursing and Co-director of AUT's Interdisciplinary Trauma Research Centre, Jane Koziol-McLain, received over \$1.1 million for her research into internet-based interventions to improve mental health outcomes for abused women. Her work is focused on improving the health system response to violence against women and children: "violence against women and children is acknowledged as a human rights, social and health issue that can be prevented," she says.

Koziol-McLain says the objective of this research initiative is to develop culturally appropriate and accessible interventions that will help women develop a personalised safety plan during the critical decision making period within an abusive relationship.

"Research consistently demonstrates a strong association between intimate partner violence, increased rates of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse and suicide. One of the most widely recommended interventions for

abused women is safety planning," she says.

Associate Professor Denise Taylor currently heads AUTs Neurological Rehabilitation Team and receives over \$986,000 for stroke research which looks at telerehabilitation to improve outcomes for people with chronic stroke.

Each day – on average – 21 New Zealander's will suffer a stroke and over 2000 people die every year, says Taylor.

"Whether an individual receives ongoing stroke services is often related to non-stroke factors such as resource availability and location. There is emerging international interest in the provision of rehabilitation using technology such as telerehabilitation."

The study will use a combination of telephone and texting communication in addition to face-to-face contact. An overarching goal of the research is to facilitate increased participation in community and social activities by improving the functional independence of the participants.

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) research receives \$345,000 which goes towards Professor Valery Feigin's



Professor Jane Koziol-McLain

ongoing study on the incidence and outcomes of TBI in New Zealand. Feigin, Director of AUTs National Institute for Stroke and Applied Neurosciences, says the initial findings from the BIONIC (Brain Injury Outcomes New Zealand In The Community) study have revealed the overall incidence of TBI is far higher than anticipated and the percentage of TBI in Maori is also higher than expected.

Pro Vice-Chancellor's Perspective

Three AUT University research teams received grants in the latest Health Research Council (HRC) funding round. Research is central to university life. It is important in its own right; advancing knowledge and raising further questions for investigation. It also underpins other major roles in teaching, learning, community service and in being a critic and conscience of society.

Much of AUT's research is applied, leading to new products and technologies and enhancing policy-making and professional practice. Some centres, such as our Institute for Radio Astronomy and Space Research, have a more 'pure' focus on expanding the frontiers of human understanding. Recently researchers from AUT's Warkworth observatory linked up with four Australian radio telescopes and directed the collection of huge amounts of data simultaneously from a remote quasar. This virtual e-telescope was a first for Australasia. It made use of New Zealand's high-capacity fibre optic KAREN (Kiwi Advanced Research and Education Network) and its Australian counterpart.

The geographical location of the Warkworth telescope is important, enabling much greater resolution and 'observation' of very distant galaxies and quasars. AUT's investment in this area supports the Australia/New Zealand

bid to host the Australasian Square Kilometer Array (SKA). The SKA is a \$1 billion plus international project to develop a giant network of thousands of receivers linked together, sharing data.

The decision regarding the SKA site, which has narrowed down to Australia/ New Zealand and South Africa, is expected next year.

The projects to be funded by the just-announced HRC grants, while extending knowledge, have more immediate application, in this instance in improving health outcomes and wellbeing. Two of the projects involve the innovative use of communications technology (internet, telephone and texts). Interventions of this type have huge potential to expand the outreach of health education, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation - and help meet the challenge of finding ways to provide more accessible, effective health services during a time of increased demand and constrained funding. While some progress is being made, New Zealand is dragging the chain in this area.



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