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Pfizer Australia

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CORPORATE AFFAIRS

MEDIA RELEASE

Million dollar life savers

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Two of Australia's leading researchers have each won a million dollars to fund their ongoing cutting-edge Australian research into brain disorders, autoimmune diseases and leukaemia.

The two Melbourne-based researchers have each won a Pfizer Australia Fellowship, believed to be Australia's largest single private medical research grants after a gruelling independent selection process.

There were six finalists from across the country vying for the two coveted fellowships.

This is the fourth year of the Pfizer Fellowships, bringing the total number to nine, with each receiving \$1 million over a five year period.

Dr Anthony Hannan, BSc (Hons) PhD (Syd), 36 is a Senior Research Fellow from the Howard Florey Institute, University of Melbourne has been awarded a Pfizer Fellowship worth \$1 million.

Dr Hannan's recent work demonstrated that environmental factors such as mental and physical exercise can delay the onset of some degenerative brain diseases such as Huntington's Disease (HD).

This fatal disease is characterized by degeneration of the significant areas of the brain such as the cortex and striatum, producing motor, cognitive and psychiatric symptoms.

HD was thought to be the epitome of genetic determinism. Environmental enrichment of mice was found to dramatically delay onset and progression of brain disease.

Dr Hannan will use his Pfizer Australia Research Fellowship to further explore key areas of neuroscience, and work towards the eventual development of new therapeutic approaches for devastating brain diseases such as Huntington's, schizophrenia and Alzheimer's.

Dr Stephen Nutt, BSc (Hons) PhD, from the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute has also been awarded the second Pfizer Fellowship for 2006.

Stephen Nutt's project concentrates upon blood cells and the development of the immune system.

It is hoped that new information in this area will lead to the development of therapies for diseases of the blood such as autoimmune diseases and leukaemia.

The cells in the blood are the descendants of a very rare stem cell that has the ability to maintain itself throughout the life span of the individual and to generate billions more mature cell types.

The project aims to understand how the stem cell achieves these feats and to determine the relationships of various cell progeny. This should provide us with a map for the production of the blood cell types that contribute to the immune system.

This year he also won the Burnet Prize.

Pfizer Australia is the nation's leading research-based health care company. It discovers, develops, manufactures and markets innovative medical treatments for both humans and animals. Pfizer Australia is investing \$A40m in local research and development. For more information visit www.pfizer.com.au

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