

Wednesday 6 December 2017

## **Notre Dame's School of Medicine researchers to lead major cholesterol study**

### ***\$2 million funding a first for Fremantle-based medical school***

**Researchers at The University of Notre Dame Australia's Fremantle-based School of Medicine will lead a \$2 million three-year study into the early intervention and treatment of an inherited high cholesterol disease, a condition that often goes undiagnosed with devastating effects.**

Notre Dame's Professor Tom Brett and Associate Professor Diane Arnold-Reed will lead the five-State study with Professor Gerald Watts from Royal Perth Hospital and the University of Western Australia.

The \$2 million in funding was announced today (Wednesday 6 December) by the Federal Government's National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and comprises a contribution from the NHMRC of \$518,588, partner cash (\$484,766) and in-kind support (\$1,045,980) – which includes contributions from the research partners and health networks, both financial and through the use of medical facilities.

More than 45,000 Australians – including 5000 West Australians – suffer from the condition, called familial hypercholesterolemia (FH) in medical circles. An inherited condition which causes very high cholesterol levels from birth into adult life, failure to diagnose and treat the disease can lead to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, specifically coronary artery disease, at an early age.

The study will be undertaken in 17 general practices in WA, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania and will not only investigate ways to improve the early diagnosis of FH to prevent long-term cardiovascular disease, but also develop improved, cost-effective strategies to provide better care to patients and families.

"Until recently, FH has been managed mainly through hospital clinics with the majority under-treated despite effective remedies being available," Professor Brett said.

Professor Greg Blatch, Pro Vice Chancellor Research, said: "this is Notre Dame's first NHMRC Partnership Grant and one that will contribute positively to improving the long-term health of families. The University looks forward to working alongside its partner institutions in developing strategies to provide better care for people suffering from this condition."

The research team draws on collaborations with Professor David Sullivan (Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and University of Sydney), Associate Professor Alistair Vickery (UWA), Dr Ian Li (UWA), Professor Clare Heal (James Cook University), Associate Professor Charlotte Hespe (Notre Dame), Associate Professor Jan Radford (University of Tasmania) and Professor Gerard Gill (Deakin University).

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**Caption:** Professor Tom Brett and Associate Professor Diane Arnold-Reed will lead a \$2 million three-year study into an inherited high cholesterol disease called familial hypercholesterolemia.