

Thursday 1 December

Territory researchers win national awards

Two researchers from Menzies School of Health Research were recognised for their contribution to the science community at the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Gala Dinner held at Parliament House in Canberra last night.

Associate Professor Amanda Leach and Robyn Marsh were awarded the inaugural Elizabeth Blackburn Fellowship and Frank Fenner Early Career Fellowship respectively.

The 2011 Blackburn Fellowship, named after the Australian Nobel Laureate, was awarded to only three women nationally and is intended to foster the career and development of female scientists excelling in biomedical, clinical and public health research.

Associate Professor Amanda Leach was recognised in the clinical category for her work on the prevention and treatment of otitis media (middle ear infection) in Indigenous communities throughout the Territory.

Director of Menzies, Professor Jonathan Carapetis, said the award is suitable recognition for Associate Professor Leach's contributions over many years to the health of children living in remote communities.

"Amanda Leach has been researching how to treat and prevent childhood ear and lung infections at Menzies for more than two decades.

"The Blackburn Fellowship is long overdue recognition of her as one of Australia's top women in health and medical research," Professor Carapetis said. "We know what a high quality, dedicated researcher she is."

Associate Professor Leach said this award will help her and the ear health team at Menzies to continue their research to address problems of otitis media and its associated hearing loss in Indigenous children.

"After working for more than 23 years at Menzies this is an amazing recognition," she said.

PhD candidate from Menzies School of Health Research, Robyn Marsh, was awarded the Frank Fenner Early Career Fellowship for her research project to improve respiratory health in Indigenous children.

Ms Marsh, who is enrolled through Charles Darwin University, said chronic suppurative lung disease (CSLD) affects 1 in 68 Indigenous children in the Northern Territory.

"The condition leads to a loss of lung function which reduces life-expectancy," Ms Marsh said.

"This fellowship enables me to continue Indigenous health research and further work into understanding how the disease develops in Indigenous children," she said.

"Robyn embodies the characteristics of a fine researcher and there is no doubt she has a promising career ahead of her," Professor Carapetis said. "Congratulations to both Amanda and Robyn for their achievements."

Tom Snelling, who worked at Menzies until this year as a PhD student, also received a Frank Fenner Fellowship from the NHMRC.

Media opportunity

Associate Professor Amanda Leach will be available for interview on Thursday until 9am and all day Friday.

Robyn Marsh will be available for interview Thursday afternoon and all day Friday.

Background

Menzies School of Health Research has a national reputation as a leading research institute in Indigenous and tropical health research. With its head office in Darwin in the Northern Territory, Menzies has been conducting its ground-breaking research for more than 25 years. We have more than 300 dedicated staff and we work hand in hand with communities throughout Australia and across the tropical region to our North.

For media enquiries please contact Jenna Hoare on 0407 181 894.