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Multimillion dollar grant to boost Australia's response to infectious disease outbreaks

Improving Australia's emergency response to infectious diseases through a national research effort is the focus of a new \$5 million National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Centre of Research Excellence (CRE) announced today.

The Australian Partnership for Preparedness Research on Infectious Diseases Emergencies (APPRISE) will bring together Australia's leading experts in clinical, laboratory and public health research to address the key components required for a rapid and effective emergency response to infectious diseases.

APPRISE Chief Investigator, Professor Sharon Lewin, Director of the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity (Doherty Institute), a joint venture of The University of Melbourne and The Royal Melbourne Hospital, said the new CRE would ensure Australia is equipped for a more coordinated, effective and evidence-based response to infectious disease outbreaks.

"Even with no cases of Ebola and an absence of Zika virus outbreaks in Australia despite multiple importations, the threat of deadly infectious disease outbreaks happening closer to home is very real," Professor Lewin said.

"This multidisciplinary team will create and share new knowledge to detect, prevent and manage emerging infection threats."

"APPRISE will work with a newly established national network and with Commonwealth and State governments to create a sustainable research program to inform Australia's emergency response to infectious diseases."

The University of Melbourne is the administering institution for APPRISE, and will collaborate with multiple organisations around Australia to create a truly national network.

"We have outstanding research in emergency response to infectious diseases across Australia in multiple disciplines. The CRE will now allow for national coordination of these efforts, integration of different disciplines, training of early career researchers and a close link to government," Professor Lewin concluded.

NHMRC Chief Executive Officer, Professor Anne Kelso said the new Centre would play an important role in Australia's readiness to respond to future pandemics and other infectious disease emergencies.

"History tells us that new infectious diseases will continue to emerge but that we cannot predict when, where or how. The purpose of this significant NHMRC grant is to establish national capability to respond rapidly when such threats do emerge by undertaking the research needed to inform the public health response," Professor Kelso said.

APPRISE participating institutions:

The Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity, The University of Melbourne and The Royal Melbourne Hospital
Marie Bashir Institute for Infectious Diseases and Biosecurity, The University of Sydney
University of Western Australia
The Kirby Institute, University of New South Wales
Menzies School of Health Research, Charles Darwin University
Monash University
The Westmead Institute for Medical Research, The University of Sydney
Pathwest Laboratory Medicine
Geelong Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases, Deakin University
University of Queensland
University of Adelaide
Griffith University
James Cook University
Australian Red Cross Blood Service
Queensland Health
Burnet Institute

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