



25 June, 2009

Groundbreaking medical research grant announced

One of Australia's biggest grants for research into inflammatory bowel disease was announced today by Crohn's & Colitis Australia (CCA).

The \$150,000 Angela McAvoy AM Research Fellowship is sponsored by CCA, a not-for-profit organisation supporting people with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, collectively known as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

The conditions affect more than 61,000 Australians, a number expected to increase by 23 per cent by 2020, and can cause severe diarrhoea, abdominal pain, weight loss and fatigue. There is currently no cure and the exact cause is unknown, although it is thought to be an auto-immune disorder triggered by genetic and environmental factors.

The two-year fellowship is available to Australian citizens with a higher research degree who have previously undertaken clinical research, and outline a research proposal that applies to clinical aspects of patients with IBD.

Preference will be given to proposals that focus on early diagnosis, prevention, disease management and wellbeing, and epidemiology.

CCA chief executive Francesca Manglaviti said the fellowship would encourage and advance clinical research into Crohn's disease and colitis in Australia, and attract a high level of applicants.

"Attracting leading researchers in this specialist field is essential to developing better treatments for IBD, and hopefully one day, a cure. CCA hopes this fellowship will help achieve these aims," she said.

Ms Manglaviti said the \$75,000-a-year fellowship was the largest Australian IBD fellowship to be funded by a charity.

"Unfortunately only 0.1 per cent of the national health budget is allocated to IBD, and of that only 1 per cent is allocated to research. Until the government is prepared to fund more research, it falls to CCA to lead the way," she said.

The fellowship is named in honour CCA founder Angela McAvoy AM, who started the charity (formally known as the Australian Crohn's & Colitis Association) in 1985, after she was diagnosed with Crohn's and realised there was no where to turn for information or support.

During her 21 years as CCA managing director, Ms McAvoy was instrumental in raising the association's profile on a national level, establishing an information advice line and providing a range of educational materials to support people living with Crohn's and colitis.

Ms McAvoy said she was "humbled" when told of the fellowship.

"It would be wonderful if we could just turn the key and the lock opened, but cures don't happen like that," Ms McAvoy said.

"Hopefully this grant will bring about really good projects that improve the lives of people living with disease. And it would be great to see an Australian find the cure."

ENDS

About Crohn's & Colitis Australia

- CCA is the peak body representing people with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis in Australia
- CCA's mission is to support the Crohn's and colitis community with a focus on confidential support programs, including education, advocacy, counselling, increasing awareness and generating and utilising funds for research and programs
- CCA's Information Line receives more than 1000 calls a year
- More than 2000 people attend CCA IBD information forums around Australia every year
- CCA is a registered not-for-profit national organisation funded entirely through membership fees, donations and fundraising activities.
- CCA does not currently receive financial support from either the Federal or State Governments

For interviews contact:

Francesca Manglaviti, Chief Executive Officer, 03 9815 1266 or 0400 225 207

Alison McClelland, Communications Manager, 03 9815 1266

For more information please visit www.crohnsandcolitis.com.au or contact the CCA office on 1800 138 029.