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Medical research receives boost from Brennen Trust

Research into treatment for injuries and diseases, such as Lupus, skin grafts and uterine bleeding, that find it difficult to attract funding, has been boosted by grants totalling \$108,000 from the Brennen Benevolent Trust.

The Trust, which is administered by Equity Trustees Limited (EQT) and its co-trustees, Mr Peter James and Dr Robert James, will provide funding to five research projects through its second round of grants for 2010/2011, giving a total of \$198,000 for the year.

The projects are:

- The Alfred's research into cultured skin grafts for burns patients (\$14,208)
- The Macfarlane Burnet Institute's study of the role of hormones in Lupus disease (\$30,000)
- Monash University's study of the role of dopamine in Parkinson's disease (\$30,000)
- Prince Henry's Institute's work in developing treatments for abnormal uterine bleeding and infertility (\$20,000)
- Monash University's research into neutralising human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) (\$14,650)

(For more information on these projects, see attached backgrounders)

"Although the individual amounts are not particularly large, for the recipients it is important funding and targets specific projects that otherwise struggle to attract funding," said Ms Tabitha Lovett, head of philanthropy at Equity Trustees.

"Each of the projects chosen will use the funds to buy vital equipment that is necessary to further their work, and in some cases, to allow key research to continue.

"In many instances, the research being undertaken locally, leads the world and is likely to result in more effective treatments for diseases that affect many Australians.

"The Brennen Benevolent Trust is an excellent example of how establishing a perpetual charitable trust enables a benefactor's gift to grow in a tax advantaged environment in perpetuity while providing funding year after year to specific charities or causes - in this case, medical research and the equipment needed to undertake it," she said.

Dr Heather Cleland, director of the Victorian Adult Burns Unit at The Alfred, whose research team is involved in developing more effective burns treatments, agreed that funding in such specialist areas can be hard to attract.

"High profile and death-preventing research, like cancer and heart disease, attracts most philanthropic donations for medical research.

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“Yet injuries such as burns can be devastating for those affected. Recovery and reintegration depends to a large extent on the quality of skin reconstruction, and finding ways to improve the quality of healing and minimise scarring are increasingly important.

“It is a highly specialised field and while it benefits smaller groups of patients compared to other areas of medical research such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes, it is essential if we are to help people who are otherwise scarred physically and mentally for life.

“The grant will be used to purchase a refrigerated centrifuge and is a tremendous boost to our research. We are extremely pleased that the trustees of the Brennen Trust have recognised the value of our work and chosen to support it,” she said.

The Harold and Cora Brennen Benevolent Trust was established by Harold Brennen in 1996 through his will to support the purchase of equipment and instruments for medical research.

Since its inception the Trust has distributed over \$1,500,000 through 65 grants to hospitals and research institutes to purchase much needed equipment for medical research projects.

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