

Media Release

The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC

Minister for Employment

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy

Minister for Small Business



Monday, 7 December 2020

PREMIER'S AWARDS CELEBRATE MEDICAL RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Victoria's brightest emerging leaders in health and medical research have been honoured at the prestigious 26th annual Premier's Awards for Health and Medical Research.

Top honours – the Premier's Research Excellence Award – went to Dr Simone Park from the University of Melbourne and the Peter Doherty Institute for her work on local immune protection against cancer and infection.

Dr Park's research has revealed how local immune cells inhibit cancer and infection, with encouraging evidence for further exploration of tissue-resident memory cells as targets of future cancer therapy and vaccines. Dr Park was awarded \$20,000 and a trophy designed by Geelong-based Indigenous art collective Wathaurong Glass.

Research conducted by this year's award finalists include exploring genetic factors in cancer risk, managing health risks in babies, finding gentler approaches to diagnosing young children, time-critical treatment of stroke patients, influences in mental health vulnerability and treatment, and targeted treatment of chronic health issues.

The Premier's Awards celebrate the achievements of Victoria's early-career health and medical researchers and highlight the breadth of work being undertaken in Victoria that can make significant improvements to the lives of people around the world.

The awards were judged by a panel of six experts from the health and medical research sector, with category winners each receiving \$5,000.

Category winners were: Cammi Murrup-Stewart (Monash University – Aboriginal researcher), Dr Melissa Lee (University of Melbourne and Murdoch Children's Research Institute – clinical research), Dr Xinyang Hua (University of Melbourne – health services) and Dr Jesse Young (University of Melbourne – public health).

The *Victorian Budget 2020/21* supports our hardworking researchers, clinicians and scientists, dedicating more than \$260 million to boost jobs in the sector and reinforce Victoria's standing as a medical research centre of excellence.

Funding includes a \$155 million foundation investment in the Australian Institute for Infectious Disease, support to expand access to clinical trials in regional areas, a boost for genomic sequencing research to develop precision care and backing for more treatment options for Victorians fighting cancer.

Victoria is home to 14 independent medical research institutes that employ more than 5,800 people. The state's wider medical research sector supports more than 30,000 jobs across institutes, universities and industry.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford

"Victorian researchers improve lives and save lives with their hard work, inspiration and sustained excellence, and that's why we back them every step of the way."

"Congratulations to this year's award winners and finalists – and the thousands of other researchers who devote their careers to helping people, whether they live next door or on the other side of the world."