

Media Release

The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC

Minister for Employment

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy

Minister for Small Business



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VICTORIAN WOMEN LEADING COVID-19 RESEARCH CHARGE

Victoria's female scientists have been celebrated for their dedication and excellence as they spearhead the medical research response to coronavirus.

Almost 60 per cent of Australia's medical research community are women and Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford said that on International Women's Day, it was appropriate to recognise the leading role played by so many women researchers.

As vaccines roll out around the world, there remains an urgent need to better understand the long-term impacts of the virus on the body, and to find new practices that will limit the damage this virus can cause.

Since March 2020, the Andrews Labor Government has committed \$31 million to COVID-19 research - \$14.7 million to 17 projects and a further \$16.5 million in the November budget.

Dr Ranja Salvamoser is leading a team at Exopharm to develop an anti-viral treatment for COVID-19. For people in the early stages of infection and those who can't take vaccines, an effective antiviral could be lifesaving. If successful, this type of developmental therapy could be adapted to treat other viral infections, like influenza.

At the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity, Professor Kanta Subbarao leads the antiviral research effort looking for antiviral drugs to block SARS-CoV-2's ability to infect and cause disease.

She also works with a team of stem cell specialists from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Monash University, and Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, studying the damage COVID-19 can do to organs like the lungs, heart and kidneys to find out if existing drugs can be repurposed to treat it.

This research could one day allow doctors to understand how SARS-CoV-2 damages different organs and offer COVID-19 patients targeted treatments.

Professor Margaret Hellard and her team at the Burnet Institute are leading a multi-level study of the effect of actions such as early testing and wearing masks, testing ways to limit the risk of new infections as Victoria reopens, as well as exploring community attitudes to vaccinating and the impact isolation is having on our health, and social relationships.

At the Hudson Institute of Medical Research, Associate Professor Michelle Tate and her team are examining at the microscopic level how COVID-19 causes life-threatening inflammation in the lungs, and they are developing and testing anti-inflammatory compounds that could treat it.

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

"On International Women's Day we celebrate Victoria's female scientists who are leading the way as we seek solutions to the many issues created by this complex virus."

"We are proud to support the exceptional women seeking the scientific breakthroughs that will help to better manage this pandemic, not only in Victoria but around the world."

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