

Media Release

The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC

Minister for Employment

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy

Minister for Small Business

Minister for Resources



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LEADING LIGHTS OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH HONOURED

The Andrews Labor Government has recognised Victoria's rising medical researchers at the Premier's Awards for Health and Medical Research.

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford and Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier Steve Dimopoulos both presented the prestigious awards, recognising early-career health and medical researchers for their exceptional contributions to medicine.

The top honour, the Premier's Research Excellence Award, went to Dr Xiaodong Liu from Monash University for his work on stem cell therapeutics which can treat conditions such as Parkinson's disease. Dr Liu's research on improved stem cell therapies helped create a human embryo model made from skin cells. The model, termed an iBlastoid, was then used to study diseases affecting early development and infertility.

Claiming both the top award and the Basic Science Researcher category, Dr Liu took home a total prize of \$20,000 and a trophy designed by Geelong-based Indigenous art collective Wathaurong Glass.

Research conducted by this year's award finalists includes new biotech to track cancer cells through the body, the establishment of Australia's largest pancreatic cancer registry and biobank, stroke care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, weight variation monitoring on women and babies during pregnancy, and new performance measures on foetal growth restriction to reduce stillbirth rates.

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

2021 Premier's Awards for Health and Medical Research recipients:

- Premier's Research Excellence Award: Dr Xiaodong Liu, Monash University
- Aboriginal Researcher: Dr Angela Dos Santos, Australian Stroke Alliance
- Basic Science Researcher: Dr Xiaodong Liu, Monash University
- Clinical Researcher: Dr Rachel Nelligan, University of Melbourne
- Health Services Researcher: Dr Rebecca Goldstein, Monash University
- Public Health Researcher: Dr Roshan Selvaratnam, Monash University and Dr Christina Zorbas, Deakin University

In the past year, the Labor Government has invested more than \$590 million in medical research – including up to \$400 million for a new Australian Institute of Infectious Disease to lead the fight against future pandemics.

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.

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

"Our early-career researchers are the future of scientific discovery here in Victoria and we are immensely proud of their exceptional contributions."

Quote attributable to Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier Steve Dimopoulos

"Victoria is a global leader in medical research. The Premier's Awards for Health and Medical Research recognises the Victorian's who have achieved this global status, and through their work make the globe a healthier place."

Quote attributable to Parliamentary Secretary for Medical Research Frank McGuire

"Victoria is the beating heart of Australia's world leading medical research. Congratulations to our award winners and finalists already making an outstanding contribution to changing lives and saving lives."

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