

Press Release



Wednesday 6 January, 2010

ahm awards \$750,000 medical research grant

The ahm Health and Medical Research Fund has awarded a \$753,884 grant to Professor Kim Bennell, Professor of Physiotherapy at Melbourne University, to conduct new research into osteoarthritis.

The research project, “Addressing pain in knee osteoarthritis: physiotherapist-delivered exercise and cognitive behavioural therapy”, will be carried out over two years and hopes to determine optimal treatment and management of the disease.

Dean Tillotson, Executive General Manager of ahm said the Fund had made some important contributions to health and medical research since its inception in 1986, and that this research into osteoarthritis could have a life-changing impact on sufferers of the condition.

“ahm has a long history of helping its members to stay active and maintain their health and wellbeing. This grant – funded by donations from our members – will make a significant contribution to many who suffer from this chronic condition that does not have a cure. Our medical research fund has also assisted important research into stress, childhood leukaemia, bowel cancer screening, Parkinson’s disease and development of a malaria vaccine.”

The funding is to undertake a randomised controlled trial to investigate whether an intervention of exercise combined with cognitive behavioural therapy delivered by physiotherapists will be more effective in improving pain, physical and psychological functioning in people with knee osteoarthritis compared with either exercise or cognitive behavioural therapy alone.

Osteoarthritis is the leading cause of musculoskeletal pain and disability in Australia and the knee is the most commonly affected weight bearing joint. Knee osteoarthritis is a chronic disease with no cure that imposes considerable personal and societal costs. The bulk of the research to date has focused on surgery and drugs which are costly and have side effects.

Professor Bennell said, “the results of this research have the potential to change the clinical management of knee osteoarthritis and the manner in which treatment is delivered.”

Since its inception, ahm’s Health and Medical Research Fund has contributed almost \$7 million towards diverse research projects throughout Australia.

The most recent funding was allocated in 2007, when two significant projects were funded in the area of mental health. This included \$501,490 for a three year period to the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute and \$377,164 for a three year period to the University of Western Sydney.

Prof. Bennell will recruit 222 patients from Melbourne and Brisbane from June 2010.

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