

9 November 2009

Just the tip of the iceberg - Hope for inherited childhood disorders **Top SA medical researcher honoured nationally**

Professor John Hopwood, South Australian Scientist of the Year 2008, this evening followed in the footsteps of some of Australia's greatest medical researchers, including immediate past winner Professor Ian Frazer and Nobel Laureates Professors Barry Marshall and Robin Warren, by being awarded the **2009 CSL Florey Medal**.

Professor Hopwood joined a cohort of extraordinary Australian medical researchers who are at the forefront of breakthroughs globally, and who have dedicated their lives to basic research all the way through to making a difference to our lives through prevention and treatment.

This prestigious honour is part of the Australian Institute of Policy and Science's Tall Poppy Campaign and takes its name from Australia's first Nobel Laureate in Medicine, Sir Howard Florey, who made an indelible impact on world health by developing penicillin. The winner receives a \$25,000 prize and a hand sculpted silver medal, joining the most recent winner, Professor Ian Frazer in 2007.

Hopwood first formed the Lysosomal Diseases Research Unit in 1976 in South Australia. This Unit is the only group researching lysosomal storage disorders nationally and is the largest multidisciplinary group working on them world-wide. The Unit is world-renowned for its research capabilities and the translation of research findings into state-of-the art diagnostic services.

Lysosomal diseases are genetically inherited and affect about 1 in 5,000 babies, with recent findings suggesting maybe up to about 1 in 1,000. Symptoms are progressive and impact on many body organs including the skeleton, heart, lungs and brain with devastating effects.

Hopwood's Unit has generated several world firsts, particularly the isolation of genes involved in some of these disorders and the development of first ever FDA-approved treatments for two disorders which were marketed world-wide in 2005 and 2006. These outcomes meant improved quality of life for patients and multi-million dollar royalty returns to South Australia, representing the largest public sector commercialisation outcome for that state, and possibly Australia.

Ongoing research commercialisation is well advanced to enable screening and the development of effective therapies for lysosomal disorders affecting the brain.

Hopwood says: "we are just tipping the iceberg." He is most of all excited about the discoveries that link lysosomal disease to unexplained cancers, stroke and neurological disorders that concern us all, as well as his team's achievements in helping the many children affected.

Professor Peter Rathjen, AIPS Director, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) at the University of Melbourne and Chair of the 2009 CSL Florey Medal Selection Committee says the bi-annual accolade was created in 1998, the centenary of Sir Howard Florey's birth, to celebrate world standing achievements in biomedical science and human health advancement by Australian researchers.

"Many top ranking scientists were in the running for this year's medal, a testament to the excellence in Australian medical research. Professor Hopwood was the winner, reflecting the quality of his long term dedication from basic research through to clinical outcomes," he says.

“John Hopwood is an Australian medical researcher whom we should celebrate, and who should stand high on the Australian and world stage for his achievements, alongside other great Australian medical researchers.”

John Hopwood comments: “It is important that biomedical scientists receive recognition for the perseverance that is required for real outcomes through research. For this I am thankful for this award. It is important that we also recognise all the clinicians and scientists involved. But neither they nor I would be where they are without the patients and families, nor would our work have any meaning without their need. “

CSL, Australia’s leading biopharmaceutical company, became the principal sponsor of the Florey Medal this year as part of its commitment to recognising and promoting scientific excellence in Australia.

“Australia has much to celebrate when it comes to achievements in medical research, and we need role models who can inspire a new generation of innovative scientists. Professor John Hopwood is one such person and an extremely deserving winner of the 2009 CSL Florey Medal” Dr Andrew Cuthbertson, Chief Scientific Officer at CSL said today.

Where & When: Monday 9 November
Doltone House Loft, Jones Bay Wharf
Pyrmont Point, Sydney

6.30pm for 7.00 pm - 10.00 pm (Awards ceremony and Australian Association of Medical Research Institutes Annual Dinner)

Who: **Professor John Hopwood**, and:

- Professor Peter Rathjen, Director AIPS/ University of Melbourne
- Dr Andrew Cuthbertson, Chief Scientific Officer, CSL Limited
- Professor Robert Graham AO, President AAMRI
- Hon Mark Butler MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Health
- Hon Jodi McKay, NSW Minister for Science and Medical Research
- Elektra Spathopoulos, Executive Director AIPS
- Senior representatives of SA Health, including Dr Tony Sherbon, CEO

Background: <http://www.aips.net.au/24.html> and <http://www.aips.net.au/174.html>
And also: <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2007/s2226990.htm>

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CITATION FOR PROFESSOR JOHN HOPWOOD

Professor Hopwood is honoured with the 2009 CSL Florey Medal for his life-long work into the diagnosis and treatment of genetically inherited disorders that affect children with devastating clinical effects leading to progressive destruction of the brain and other organs.

Born in Melbourne, and educated at the Swinburne Institute and then Monash University, Hopwood first formed the Lysosomal Diseases Research Unit in 1976.

From basic science to clinical trials, through to clinical outcomes and commercialisation, Professor Hopwood has dedicated three decades of research, discovery and personal perseverance in the service of human health advancement for the sufferers of lysosomal storage disorders (LSD) which affect at least one in 5,000 babies if not one in 1,000, as recent research suggests. Recently, lysosomes have become implicated in otherwise unexplained stroke and heart disease, cancers and neurodegenerative disorders.

Professor Hopwood today heads a group of more than 30 researchers through SA Pathology at the Adelaide's Women's and Children's Hospital, focusing on the diagnosis and treatment of LSD, and was awarded the South Australian of the Year (Science) Award in 2008 amongst other accolades. Hopwood and his team have developed a novel program to enable newborn screening for these disorders. His unit has achieved world-first treatments for two lysosomal storage diseases that have dramatically improved clinical outcomes for patients worldwide, numerous patents, as well as FDA-approved drugs and commercial licenses and attracted over \$30 million in competitive research funding, to date.

John Hopwood's research is world leading. He has displayed continuous and humble dedication and effectiveness in relating to LSD patients and their families alongside his research team, clinicians, global colleagues and pharmaceutical companies. John is a man of vision who, through basic research, persistence and commitment, has accumulated and harnessed scientific knowledge and techniques to achieve his stated goal of "early diagnosis and effective therapy of lysosomal storage disorders". Without his efforts, thousands worldwide would be without diagnosis, therapy or the hope that either would ever come.

2009 CSL FLOREY MEDAL SELECTION COMMITTEE

Professor Peter Rathjen - Chair Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) – and AIPS Director	The University of Melbourne
Professor Warwick Anderson AM Chief Executive Officer	NHMRC
Professor Suzanne Cory Director	Walter Eliza Hall Institute
Professor Geoffrey Donnan Director	Florey Institute
Steven Dower	Head of Protein Biochemistry Honorary Professor, Bio21 Institute Diamantina Institute for Cancer, Immunology and Metabolic Medicine, QIMR Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute
Professor Ian Frazer Director	
Professor Peter Schofield Executive Director and CEO	
Professor Fiona Wood Winthrop Professor	Burn Injury Research Unit The University of Western Australia