** Embargoed Thursday 31/01/12, 9am**

**Australian Rotary Health Funds World Firsts in Mental Health Research**

Australian Rotary Health has awarded eight prestigious PhD scholarships in the aim of finding treatments, preventions and cures for mental illnesses. Ian Scott PhD Scholarships are named in honour of the Rotarian who founded Australian Rotary Health in 1981. They provide a maximum of $29,000 per year to PhD students for up to 3.5 years.

“These Scholarships provide an opportunity for young scientists to work with experienced researchers while contributing to the realm of innovative mental health research,” says Joy Gillett, CEO of Australian Rotary Health.

Ian Scott (1933-2001) had a commitment to research and desire to make a difference, which has been fundamental in seeing Australian Rotary Health grow. It is now one Australia’s largest non-government funding bodies of mental health research expending over $2 million in 2013 on health research grants and scholarships.

Studies supported will scope many areas of mental health including new treatments for schizophrenia, the impacts of prenatal alcohol and drug exposure on infant brain development, treating depression among low vision adults, and testing dietary improvement as an effective treatment for mental health.

“As mental health continues to represent a significant burden to the Australian community, we are committed to improving the lives of Australians affected by mental health through focussed research.” Ms. Gillett says.

Anika Martin, who has received funding to undertake her PhD studies at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), NSW, will provide world-first data on the prescription of opioids (e.g. morphine, oxycodone, codeine) in treating chronic pain for patients also suffering anxiety and/or depression.

“The scholarship funding is vital for supporting this research, which has the potential to make a large positive impact on the quality of life of the many Australians who experience chronic pain,” she said.

Aves Middleton, at the General Practice and Primary Health Care Academic Centre, The University of Melbourne, Victoria, aims to increase the identification of people experiencing suicidal thoughts and improve the care provided to them by health professionals.

“Being awarded scholarship funds from Australian Rotary Health will allow me to dedicate 3 full years to investigate this important issue and allow me to develop research skills that I would not have been able to do without having this scholarship,” Ms. Middleton said.

Australian Rotary Health will expend $406,000 in 2013 to support a total of 14 new and continuing Ian Scott PhD Scholars. For more information or to donate visit [www.australianrotaryhealth.org.au](http://www.australianrotaryhealth.org.au)

**List of 2013 Ian Scott Scholarship Recipients**

Jessica Andrews

Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute/University of Wollongong, NSW

*“Lingo-1 signalling pathway: an emergent role in schizophrenia pathophysiology”*

Annie Brennan

Brain Dynamics Centre/University of Sydney, NSW

*“Cognition in First Episode Psychosis: Mapping Relationships between Task Performance, Brain Changes and Symptoms”*

Clare McCormack

National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre/University of New South Wales, NSW

*“Impacts of prenatal alcohol and drug exposure on infant cognitive development.”*

Edith Eva Holloway

Department of Ophthalmology/University of Melbourne, Vic.

*“Managing depression within low vision rehabilitation services: the effectiveness of integrating an evidence-based therapy ‘Problem-Solving Therapy for Primary Care’ on depression, quality of life and service utilisation in those with low vision.”*

Siobhan Housden

Barwon Psychiatric Research Unit/Deakin University, Vic.

*“Investigating the impact of dietary improvement as a treatment strategy in mental health.”*

Anika Martin

National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre/University of New South Wales, NSW

*“Do depression and anxiety complicate the risks and treatment outcomes for individuals living with chronic pain?”*

Natalie Matosin

Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute/University of Wollongong, NSW

*“Metabotropic Glutamate Receptor 5 in the Pathology and Treatment of Schizophrenia.”*

Aves Middleton

General Practice and Primary Health Care Academic Centre/University of Melbourne, Vic.

*“The development of an effective response for the management of suicidality in primary care for patients with depressive symptoms.”*

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