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**Novocastrian Awarded Scholarship for World First Study**

Novocastrian, Anika Martin, has been awarded one of eight prestigious Ian Scott Scholarships through Australian Rotary Health. Originally graduating from Merewether High School, Broadmeadow, she will be undertaking her PhD studies this year at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), NSW. 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.

“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.”

As many as one in five Australians experience chronic pain and many people suffering from a chronic pain condition also suffer from anxiety or depression. This research will be important in providing detailed information on the prevalence of anxiety and depression among individuals with chronic pain.

“Understanding the overlap between chronic pain and anxiety or depression is vital in helping health professionals and policy makers provide appropriate services for this group. This research will also examine how people with chronic pain are currently accessing health services such as psychologists, doctors and specialists.”

“My research aims to track the effectiveness of opioid medication for chronic pain, particularly focusing on outcomes for those who also have anxiety or depression.”

Ms. Martin’s research 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. She will also produce much-needed evidence about the effectiveness of prescribing pharmaceutical opioids for chronic pain patients with anxiety and/or depression.

“This research will add to our understanding of when opioids are most likely to be an effective treatment and where there are risks in prescribing opioids.”

Opioid prescriptions have increased 300% in the past 15 years despite concerns of its adverse effects, particularly among elderly patients who are at risk of overdose, confusion, falls and injuries.

“These medications can have some serious side effects so it is important to understand the risks and effectiveness of this treatment.”

Ms. Martin’s study will help to improve the treatments available for the many Australians who experience this condition. It will also provide information for policy makers and health care professionals to understand the mental health needs of individuals with a chronic pain condition.

This research is part of the broader ‘POINT’ study funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council which will track 1500 people who have been prescribed opioids for chronic pain over two years.

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)

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