



NDARC awarded NHMRC project grants for alcohol and opioid research

The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) at UNSW has received two project grants in NHMRC funding announced this week.

- Professor Richard Mattick:
Parental supply of alcohol to children: Associations with early adult health – “binge” drinking, alcohol-related harms, aggression, and Alcohol Use Disorders
\$1,127,690
- Professor Louisa Degenhardt:
Combating escalating harms associated with pharmaceutical opioid use
\$925,767

The parental supply of alcohol study led by Professor Richard Mattick will follow 1,810 children, who were first recruited at age 13, and their parents and monitor them to age 20-23 when risky drinking behaviours and harms become obvious.

“We know through monitoring these children and their families to age 18 that parental supply increases risky drinking and harms,” said Professor Mattick.

“By following this same cohort until after the legal age of drinking and into early adulthood we will be able to assess the development of alcohol use disorders, other harms and aggression at an age when drinking is much more common and behaviours more entrenched.”

Opioid prescribing has increased 15-fold in Australia in the past two decades. Professor Louisa Degenhardt will lead a study in collaboration with UNSW’s Centre for Big Data Research in Health to measure population level harms associated with this increase.

The study will assess the risks for all people prescribed opioids in NSW since 2002 using routine linked de-identified data containing information on health, social and health service utilisation in this cohort.

“This will be the largest post-marketing surveillance of prescribed opioids undertaken in Australia, linking exposure and outcomes and examining risk factors for adverse outcomes of prescribed opioids,” said Professor Degenhardt.

Two further NDARC NHMRC grants were announced last week by the Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt as part of a mental health research funding initiative. Professor Maree Teesson and her colleagues at the Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use (CREMS) were awarded a [\\$1.47 million to study prevention and early intervention](#) for mental illness and substance use during the critical transition period from adolescence to young adulthood.

Professor Teesson will also lead a [\\$1.19 million grant to continue the landmark study of long term heroin use](#): the Australian Treatment Outcome Study. The study will follow up 615 heroin users 18 to

20 years after they were first recruited by NDARC in 2001, to examine long-term mortality, heroin use and remission, psychiatric health, physical health, and health service utilisation.

In October, NDARC won more than [\\$4.5 million in national health and medical research grants](#) for five projects spanning a range of topics. This included \$2.5 million for a new Centre of Research Excellence, the PRevention & Early intervention in Mental Illness and Substance usE (PREMISE CRE).

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