

Media release
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\$5 million for serious disease research

Maurice Wilkins Centre scientists have been granted close to \$5 million from the Health Research Council's annual funding round.

Professor Ted Baker, Director, and Professors Peter Shepherd and John Fraser, Principal Investigators of the Centre, have been awarded funding for research into serious disease.

Professor Shepherd has received \$1.9 million to being a new research programme into metabolic control mechanisms. The projects within the three-year programme will look specifically at the mechanism by which nutrients control metabolism and appetite, and how these processes can be controlled in metabolic diseases such as diabetes and obesity. The national programme will include researchers from The University of Auckland, where Professor Shepherd is based, the University of Otago and Wellington Clinical School.

Research headed by Professor Baker into the structural and molecular basis of host-pathogen interactions has also received three years funding, to a value of \$1.5 million. This research will investigate the proteins that allow pathogenic bacteria to cause disease and how to prevent and treat diseases such as rheumatic fever and septicaemia using this knowledge.

Professor Fraser has been awarded \$1.3 million for a three year study into the toxins involved in staphylococcal disease. The research will investigate staphylococcal superantigen-like proteins (SSLs) and their role in virulence, pathogenicity and virus survival in the blood.

In addition, a programme extension including research from MWC Principal Investigator Professor Garth Cooper, has received an additional \$4.6 million to look at factors leading to heart failure. Associate Investigator Professor Bill Wilson also received \$3.2 million to study targeting of cancer therapeutics.

The Maurice Wilkins Centre, hosted by The University of Auckland, is one of eight Centres of Research Excellence funded by the New Zealand Government.

The HRC manages the New Zealand Government's investment in public good health research and has awarded 57 contracts totalling \$63 million in this year's annual funding round.

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