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BUPA Foundation Awards £900,000 to projects advancing public health and patient care

Eight medical research projects have received awards worth a total of £900,000 from the annual BUPA Foundation specialist grants programme. All the projects will exploit existing data sets to yield new medical knowledge, leading to improved services and treatments.

The benefit to public health and patient care from the chosen research projects is wide-reaching and the information gained will provide medical teams and policy-makers with new knowledge and resources for advancing patient care and treatment.

Occupational causes of prostate cancer

The Queensland Cancer Fund in Australia is investigating occupational causes of prostate cancer and benign enlargement of the prostate. Currently few risk factors are known for either disease and there are no preventative strategies. The project will use existing data that showed Australian Vietnam veterans are 50 percent more likely to develop prostate cancer than the general population.

*Associate Professor Lin Fritschi
The Queensland Cancer Fund, Australia*

Chronic disease management and equity of health care

A three-year study analysing Primary Care Databases will examine disease incidence and equity of health care focusing on: secondary prevention of coronary heart disease, medicines use in the elderly and sexually transmitted diseases. This study, by St George's Hospital Medical School, will provide invaluable information on chronic disease management.

*Professor Derek G. Cook
St George's Hospital Medical School*

Prevention of urinary incontinence in older women

A two-year project by the University of Leicester (Department of Health Sciences) will evaluate whether changes in diet and lifestyle can help prevent urinary incontinence in older women. It will also confirm whether similar changes can alleviate symptoms and slow progression. The conclusions from the project will contribute to the development of preventative services and improved primary care.

*Dr C W McGrother
University of Leicester*

Prevention and management of infections during pregnancy

A study led by Dr Andrew Hayward from UCL Centre for Infectious Disease

Epidemiology, will use the General Practice Research Database to analyse the cases of over 200,000 pregnant women and their offspring. The study will look at the effect of infections during pregnancy and its effect on maternal, foetal, infant and child health problems. As well as providing additional information on the cause of many disorders for both patients and the medical profession, it will also highlight the need for national strategies for prevention and management of infections.

*Dr Andrew Hayward
University College London*

Benefits of screening for coronary heart disease risk

The Department of Public Health and Primary Care at Cambridge University have received funding for a study looking into the reliability of screening for C-reactive protein for assessing coronary heart disease risk. This project will provide public health policy makers with essential information for building a case, either for or against launching a screening programme for millions of adults.

*Professor John Danesh
Head, Department of Public Health and Primary Care, University of
Cambridge*

Assisted reproductive technology and low birth weight

An Australian study, from Monash University, will confirm whether babies born by assisted reproductive technology (ART) have a low birth weight compared to non-ART babies and, if they do, whether this is due to the process or relates to the infertile couple. The results will drive new gynaecological practice policy as it will compare different forms of ART and will confirm if one type of treatment is more favourable for mother and child.

*Professor David L Healy
Monash University, Australia*

Management and resources for the Hepatitis C Virus

The hepatitis C virus (HCV) affects one in every 200 people in the UK, and is now recognised as a major global health problem by NICE and the DoH. Professor Irving from the University of Nottingham will use a grant from the BUPA Foundation to analyse the Trent HCV Cohort Study database and assess clinical effectiveness in managing the disease as well as the most effective use of resources when treating the infection at its different stages.

*Professor William L Irving
University of Nottingham*

Improved planning of health funding for Intensive Care Units

A study from the University of Western Australia will analyse existing data to provide new information about the long-term outcome of patients leaving Intensive Care Units. Researchers will consider factors including age, pre-existing illness, severity and type of critical illness to provide reliable

information for policy-makers to consider when planning intensive care services.

Dr Judith Finn
University of Western Australia

BUPA's medical director and governor of the Foundation, Dr Andrew Vallance-Owen, said: "The BUPA Foundation is absolutely delighted to provide funding for these extremely valuable projects. We are dedicated to advancing medical research to prevent, relieve and cure sickness and ill health and these projects aim to take major steps across a wide range of health issues."