

Testosterone to beat the bulk

Testosterone treatment could help to lighten the load for thousands of overweight middle-aged men, according to researchers at Prince Henry's Institute.

Dr Carolyn Allan and Professor Rob McLachlan have found that obesity is strongly associated with low testosterone levels in middle-aged men, paving the way for new research into the effects of testosterone therapy on reducing body fat.

"We have found that obese men are more likely to have lower testosterone levels, but now we want to know which comes first – the obesity or the low testosterone," Dr Allan said.

The results of the 12 month study were published in the October 16 2006 edition of The Medical Journal of Australia.

Dr Allan said low testosterone levels were symptomatic of the male menopause, a term used to describe the hormonal changes that occur in men as they age. Lethargy, fatigue, loss of muscle strength, poor concentration and irritability have also been linked to low testosterone levels.

"Testosterone levels in men decline from around the age of 40. However this decline can also be influenced by risk factors such as obesity and chronic illness, and some men are affected more than others," she said.



L- R: Dr Carolyn Allan, Sr Anna Zamojska, Sr Elise Forbes, Prof Henry Burger and Prof Rob McLachlan

Dr Allan said she was seeking healthy but overweight men aged 40 to 70 to take part in a second study on the effects of testosterone treatment on body fat.

"We now want to determine whether testosterone therapy will actually benefit men who are carrying extra abdominal fat. So far we have recruited just under half the men we need so we urgently require more volunteers to enable us to continue this important study," she said.

Men aged 40-70 years who are overweight but do not have other health problems, such as diabetes, are invited to participate in the trial.

Contact: Anna Zamojska or Elise Forbes at Prince Henry's Institute on 9594 3087 or 9594 3554.

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AWARDS

Quantum Award

Congratulations to the winner of the 2006 Quantum Scientific Award for Excellence, PhD student Louisa Ludbrook.

The annual PHI award recognizes the best research paper presented by a student at a conference the previous year.

The prize includes a cheque for \$500 and the winner's name is engraved on an award plaque which hangs proudly in the Institute hall.

Miss Ludbrook, a member of the Molecular Genetics Group at PHI, received this year's award for her research into the genes and molecules that are involved in the early stages of sex determination in humans. She is investigating new roles for key genes in sex reversal conditions.

Her research paper was presented at the International Society for Developmental Biology meeting in Sydney, September 2005.



L to R: Quantum Scientific National Sales Manager Gavin Williamson, PhD student and Quantum Award runner-up Amanda Rickard, Quantum Scientific Territory Manager Filomena Lamsis, PhD student and Quantum Award winner Louisa Ludbrook and Professor Evan Simpson

Second prize was awarded to Amanda Rickard, a member of the Endocrine Genetics Group, for her studies into the role of the glucocorticoid receptor (GR) in the development of cardiovascular disease.

Miss Rickard's research paper was presented at the High Blood Pressure Research Council of Australia meeting in Melbourne, December 2005.

Breast cancer pioneer



Director **Professor Evan Simpson** is the winner of the 2006 Komen Foundation Brinker Award for Scientific Distinction.

The Brinker Award is the Susan Komen Breast Cancer Foundation's most prestigious honour and recognizes leading scientists whose work has significantly advanced breast cancer research, screening or treatment.

Professor Simpson will receive the award at the Komen Foundation's Brinker Dinner in San Antonio, USA, on 14 December, 2006.

Young scientist blossoms

Research Officer **Dr Christine White** has been selected as a winner of the 2006 Victorian Young Tall Poppy Science Awards.



The Tall Poppy Awards recognize the achievements of outstanding young researchers in science or medical research.

A member of the Uterine Biology Group at PHI, Dr White was one of nine winners chosen from around the state for her research into the events of early pregnancy.

Growing talent at PHI

PhD student **Sean Yang** was one of six finalists across Australia in the Novartis Junior Scientist Award.

The award acknowledges the best presentation at the Endocrine Society of Australia's (ESA) Annual Scientific Meeting.

Mr Yang, a member of the Endocrine Cell Biology Group, was nominated for his studies into the production of growth hormone, which controls human growth and development. His research was presented at the ESA/SRB Annual Scientific Meeting in Queensland, August 2006.



RESEARCH NEWS

13th Annual PHI Student Symposium

The Institute's young scientific talent was showcased during the 13th Annual PHI Student Symposium in November, 2006.

Held over two consecutive days, the Student Symposium provides Postgraduate and Honours students with invaluable public speaking experience and an opportunity to present their research in a competitive environment.

Director Professor Evan Simpson said he was impressed by the high standard of student presentations at this year's event.

"Not only did the students explain their research clearly but they displayed remarkable maturity of delivery, which will serve them well in their research careers," he said.

Many thanks to Novo Nordisk, who generously sponsored the event.



L-R: PhD students Amanda Rickard, Irene Papageorgious, Chelsea Stoikos and Ken Walker with Professor Evan Simpson and Novo Nordisk representative Nina Taylor

Winners of the 2006 PHI Student Symposium:

Best Honours/Masters presentation:
Ken Walker

PhD – Best 1st year presentation:
Irene Papageorgious

PhD – Best overall presentation:
Chelsea Stoikos

PhD – Special commendation award:
Amanda Rickard

Funding success

Eight PHI scientists received medical research funding following the October announcement of the Federal Government's National Health and Medical Council (NHMRC) grants.

Congratulations to the successful NHMRC grant recipients:

Professor Jock Findlay
(Research Fellowship)

Associate Professor Vince Harley
(Research Fellowship)

Professor Rob McLachlan
(Research Fellowship)

Associate Professor David Robertson
(Research Fellowship)

Dr Craig Harrison
(Career Development Award)

Associate Professor Chen Chen and Dr Morag Young
(Project Grant)

Dr Guiying Nie
(Project Grant)

Other funding success:

Associate Professor Chen Chen received \$100,000 as the 2007 recipient of the Eli Lilly Endocrinology Award for his research into Type 2 diabetes.

PhD student **Neveen Tawardros** received \$75,000 from The Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund and the Foote Foundation to continue her research into endometrial cancer.

PHI IN THE COMMUNITY

PHI says “Thank You” to medical research

Staff at Prince Henry’s Institute (PHI) joined members of the public in celebrating Research Australia’s annual “Thank You” Day campaign.

“Thank You” Day provides Australians with the opportunity to send a ‘hero-gram’ to researchers whose work has touched their lives.

A giant “Thank You” card tours the country during the month long campaign collecting the signatures of well-known Australians, leading researchers and adults and children who have benefited from medical research.

Institute staff and scientists attended card signing events in Melbourne and Geelong during October 2006, as well as hosting a public display in the foyer of Monash Medical Centre, Clayton.



PhD student Louisa Ludbrook, Bev Bof and Charmaine De Silva sign the PHI Thank You Day card in the Monash Medical Centre foyer

Hundreds of hospital staff and visitors took the opportunity to sign the PHI “Thank You” Day card, leaving touching messages of praise and gratitude to medical researchers across Australia.

The card was displayed at the “Thank You” Day Awards Dinner in Sydney on 14 November, 2006.

Star studded support for ovarian cancer research

The NAB Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation (OCRF) hosted its annual Silver Ribbon Exposure Gala on Friday 24 November, 2006 at the Melbourne Museum in Carlton.

Hosted by renowned television personality Catriona Rowntree, the event raised more than \$164,000 for ovarian cancer research.

Guests were entertained by some of Australia’s top musical talents, including Kate Ceberano, the John Farnham Band and DivasInc, as well as a surprise performance by celebrity contestants in the popular television program, Dancing with the Stars.



Above (L - R): Dr Jane Glatz, OCRF Witchery Research Fellow Dr Henning Koehn and Dr Colin Clyne

Australian Gourmet Traveller and Champagne Devaux presented the Gala, which was supported by Mercedes-Benz.



Above (L - R): Dr Sarah Meachem, Mrs Sue Elger, Miss Ingelise Jones and Miss Alison Noonan

The NAB OCRF, in collaboration with PHI and Monash Medical Centre, are working together to develop an early detection test for ovarian cancer.

PHI IN THE COMMUNITY

Year in review at AGM

Chairman John Robinson welcomed Institute supporters to the Royal South Yarra Tennis Club in Toorak for the Annual General Meeting on 21 November, 2006.

Guests enjoyed informative research presentations from three of the Institute's top scientists, including Professor Rob McLachlan, Head of the Male Reproductive Endocrinology and Metabolism Group at PHI and Director of Andrology Australia, who spoke about Men's Health Matters in Australia.

Dr Stefan Bagheri-Fam, the Institute's current Boylan and Burke Fellow and Senior Research Officer with the Human Molecular Genetics Group, captivated the audience with a fascinating speech on Discovering New Intersex Conditions.

PhD student Natalie Hannan, a finalist in this year's national Fresh Science competition for her research into establishing a healthy pregnancy, delivered an enlightening talk on Preparing the Womb for Pregnancy.



L-R: Speakers PhD student Natalie Hannan, Professor Rob McLachlan and Senior Research Officer Stefan Bagheri-Fam

Mr Heath Rudduck, Executive Creative Director at leading advertising agency Tribal DDB and Deputy Chair of the PHI Development Board, gave an entertaining insight into the world of advertising and why he is a passionate supporter of the Institute.

Russell Fynmore AO, who recently retired as Deputy Chair of the Board at Prince Henry's, was honoured for almost 15 years of service. Mr Fynmore served on the PHI Board from 1992-2006, as well as the Board Executive and Finance Committee.

MYTH OR FACT?

Testosterone

Myth: "Men need high levels of testosterone for increased sex drive".

Fact: Scientists at Prince Henry's have discovered that "the female hormone" oestrogen is as essential to the male sex drive as "the male hormone" testosterone.

Stem cells and sex determination

Renowned international scientist Dr Robin Lovell-Badge visited Prince Henry's Institute in November to share his award winning research on sex determination and stem cells.

Dr Lovell-Badge is a world leading embryologist, geneticist and stem-cell researcher. Head of Developmental Genetics at the MRC National Institute for Medical Research in London, he was in Melbourne as a guest speaker at the



Australian Health and Medical Research Congress (AH&MRC), held from 26th November-1st December, 2006.

Dr Lovell-Badge took time out from his busy schedule to deliver a lecture to PHI scientists at a special seminar at Monash Medical Centre in Clayton.

PHI IN THE COMMUNITY

Melbourne Marathon

Congratulations to all members of the PHI Marathon Team for their outstanding achievements in the Samsung Melbourne Marathon on Sunday 8 October, 2006.

The Institute was well represented in the 42.2km Marathon, Marathon Team Relay, Half Marathon and 7.5km Marafun events.

Our enthusiastic team of PHI staff joined a record crowd of more than 7000 competitors who braved the temperamental Melbourne weather on the challenging course from Frankston to the Arts Centre on St Kilda Road.

Research Assistant Alex Umbers was inspiring in her marathon debut, completing the course in 3 hours and 52 minutes. The PHI Relay Team also ran a memorable race, finishing 20th overall in a time of 3 hours and 47 minutes. Well done to Director Evan Simpson, Hui Chua, Natalie Hannan, Naomi Morison (captain) and Kate Hale whose hard work in the lead up to the race certainly paid off.

Research Assistant Yao Wang ran an excellent half marathon in a time of 1 hour and 55 minutes.



The PHI Marathon Team: L-R: Natalie Hannan, Alex Umbers, Professor Evan Simpson, Ingelise Jones, Christina Matisons, Jane Glatz, Alison Noonan, Hui Chua, Kerry McInnes and Yao Wang

Kerry McInnes, Ingelise Jones, Alison Noonan, Sue Panckridge, Jane Glatz and Christina Matisons enjoyed the slightly less grueling 7.5km Marafun event and were on hand to cheer the marathon runners over the line.

Thank you to all involved for representing the Institute in true competitive spirit!



Professor Evan Simpson is cheered over the finish line

PHI gains new Insight

Thank you to the hundreds of readers who responded to our recent PHI Newsletter Survey.

The survey provided us with valuable feedback on the content included in the Insight newsletter, the length and number of articles, the design and readability and method of delivery.

Your feedback will be used to determine the frequency of the newsletter, what areas of research you would like to know more about and how you would prefer to support PHI.

We welcome your feedback about any of our publications throughout the year.

We look forward to keeping you in touch with the latest news from PHI.

Congratulations to **Maria Fillmara** who is the lucky winner of the special PHI prize pack and retail vouchers to the value of \$100.

For more information on INSIGHT articles, email Alison.Noonan@princehenrys.org or telephone (03) 9594 4391



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