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Melbourne Neuroscience Institute names 2012 Fellows

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The Melbourne Neuroscience Institute (MNI) has named its 2012 Fellows, Dr Sandy Schultz and Dr Lin Hung, whose projects will focus on traumatic brain injury and Parkinson's disease respectively.



2012 MNI Fellows Dr Sandy Schultz and Dr Lin Hung

Professor Trevor Kilpatrick, Director of the Melbourne Neuroscience Institute, said the new fellows were instrumental in promoting collaboration across a range of disciplines.

“Both of these research projects highlight the potential outcomes of research conducted in partnership with a range of academic staff,” he said.

The fellowships provide an opportunity for the University to promote strategic areas of research, in this case, interdisciplinary research projects in the neurosciences.

Dr Sandy Schultz's project, "Investigating the underlying mechanisms and treatment of traumatic brain injury", will examine what occurs in the brain following injury as well as medical treatment of concussions.

Medical concern is increased for individuals who are at risk of suffering multiple concussions, such as athletes and military personnel, as growing clinical evidence indicates that repeated concussion can result in long-term neurological impairments and neurodegenerative disease.

Professor Terence O'Brien, James Stewart Chair of Medicine and Head of the Department of Medicine, said, "Dr Schultz is an outstanding post-doctoral behavioural neuroscientist who brings unique expertise and training that is not only novel to the University, but is rare worldwide. Traumatic brain injury and its related neurological disorders are increasingly being recognised as a priority area by funders internationally. Dr Shultz will apply state of the art in vivo imaging techniques to investigate the long term consequences of traumatic brain injury in rats, and the impact of two novel therapeutic approaches".

Dr Hung's project focuses on Parkinson's disease. Therapeutic strategies only give symptomatic relief of the motor impairment, and its underlying cause(s) are still being debated with numerous hypotheses suggested. This has added to the ambiguity of disease progression and hindered development of effective treatments that can target all aspects of disease.

Dr Hung's team and their collaborators have pioneered work on the use of compounds such as copper as therapeutics for neurodegenerative diseases.

Professor Colin Masters, Director of the Mental Health Research said, "Dr Hung has formed strong interdisciplinary collaborative partnerships and is working towards fostering a better understanding of disease mechanisms of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. This would help in the development of effective therapeutics that are critically needed in our present day health care".

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