

MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED until 5 May 2020

New medical foundation invests in COVID-19 research funding

The Snow Medical Research Foundation (Snow Medical) is providing \$5.5 million in funding for priority COVID-19 research projects that target the critical answers we need as a nation to return to work quickly and safely, and to rebuild our economy.

The research will be led by a national collaborative consortium of Australia’s two specialist Centres of Research Excellence focused on emerging infectious diseases and pandemic response – CREID (Centre of Research Excellence in Emerging Infectious Diseases) and APPRISE (Australian Partnership for Preparedness Research on Infectious Diseases Emergencies).

“COVID-19 has had a devastating effect on Australia and the world - this is the biggest thing to hit the globe since 1945 and it will have a lasting impact for years to come,” said Terry Snow, Founder of Snow Medical. “Government has stepped up – and now is the time for the community to play a role.”

“All these measures are aimed at getting Australians back to work, making treatment more effective and efficient, and getting our economy working again.”

Tom Snow, Chair of Snow Medical, added, “We want to help Australia’s best and brightest to focus their efforts on this huge national and global challenge. This consortium is particularly notable because of its national reach and collaborative networks - it draws on research expertise from over 15 Universities and Medical Research institutes, their affiliated public hospitals, State Health Departments, public health authorities, pathology services and the Australian Red Cross Blood Service – to provide a truly national picture and coordinated approach to beating COVID-19.

Professor Tania Sorrell who is Director of the University of Sydney’s Marie Bashir Institute for Infectious Diseases and Biosecurity and the lead investigator in CREID said: “This very generous donation will help Australia lead in the fight to contain spread of COVID in the community, better protect health care workers, and offer the best care to individual patients.

“Critically, the vision of Snow Medical has enabled CREID and APPRISE to leverage the joint power of their national research networks in the fight against COVID-19.”



Funding will be deployed to these four priority projects:

1. **State of the art data science and imaging analysis using artificial intelligence and machine learning to build a secure, national electronic data analytics platform.** This will help our health system to provide faster, more individualised care for COVID-19 patients, and will develop advances in an innovative clinical trials system to accelerate the testing of new therapeutics developed in Australian research institutions.
2. **Faster, more accurate national tracking of the spread of COVID-19.** This will provide greater detail on COVID-19 infection within the Australian community. It will help us better understand infection spread in our most vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, those with compromised immune systems or multiple chronic diseases, health care workers, close contacts of patients with COVID-19 and patients who feel well. Importantly, this project will develop systems that will strengthen our national capability to respond to future emerging infectious diseases.
3. **A national biobank of highly characterized samples from symptomatic and asymptomatic COVID-19 positive individuals.** The biobank and detailed sample information will be a national asset that can be used by researchers to investigate protective immunity, genetic changes in the COVID-19 virus, infectivity and to develop new antiviral treatments and vaccines. Initially it will help provide a detailed understanding of infection dynamics in Australia - when patients become infectious, how infectious they are and how long they remain so. This information is essential to refine the duration of isolation needed to prevent spread from patients to their contacts.
4. **Blood and genetic markers of COVID-19 to accurately measure illness severity and predict the risk of becoming seriously ill.** In combination with other patient information this test will help medical staff to rapidly determine the appropriate level of care required in hospital or the community. This will facilitate early transfer of those likely to become severely ill to intensive care, increasing their likelihood of recovery.

Professor Sharon Lewin, Director of the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity (Doherty Institute), a joint venture of the University of Melbourne and The Royal Melbourne Hospital, and chief investigator for APPRISE said: “The large injection of funds supports the development of critical national platforms for the current pandemic while building capacity for future pandemics.

“Platforms for data analytics and biobanking of samples will help to improve care for people with COVID-19 and provide researchers with essential resources to accelerate understanding of many aspects of the virus, including how it spreads and affects the immune system.”

MEDIA RELEASE

Infectious diseases physician and trials expert at the University of Sydney, Professor Tom Snelling said: “Australia’s brisk and effective response to COVID-19 is the envy of many countries, but we can’t afford to become complacent. This donation will give researchers a critical boost in their race to find and implement science-driven solutions for the pandemic.”

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY

Both Terry and Tom Snow will be available for interviews about Snow Medical Research.

Lead scientists, Professors Tania Sorrell, Sharon Lewin and Tom Snelling are available for further comment.

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About Snow Medical Research Foundation (Snow Medical)

The newly established Snow Medical Research Foundation is the creation of Canberra’s Snow family and is a vision of businessman and philanthropist, Terry Snow. Through the pivotal program, the Snow Fellowships, target emerging global research leaders that show the potential to drive, manage and influence the next generation of health and medical innovation. The 8 year Snow Fellowship provides these emerging leaders the independence to focus on their research, build their research team, and establish leadership experience. This \$5.5 million announcement for COVID-19 is in addition to the \$16 million per year funding already announced for the Snow Fellowship. The inaugural Snow Fellows should be announced by 30 June.



About CREID

The Centre for **R**esearch **E**xcellence in Protecting the Public from Emerging **I**nfectious **D**iseases (CREID) is integrating microbial genomics, digital informatics and ethics research into more effective public health action and policy frameworks.

CREID is a network of leading Australian infectious disease, epidemiology, microbiology, genomics, informatics, public health and ethics researchers, funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

CREID partner institutions include:

- The University of Sydney
- Westmead Institute for Medical Research, NSW
- Macquarie University
- The Institute of Clinical Pathology and Medical Research, NSW Health Pathology
- The University of Melbourne
- Monash University
- The University of Western Australia
- Pathwest Laboratory Medicine, WA
- The Australian National University
- The University of Wollongong

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creid.org.au  [@MarieBashirInst](https://twitter.com/MarieBashirInst)

About APPRISE

The Australian Partnership for Preparedness Research on Infectious disease Emergencies ([APPRISE](#)) Centre of Research Excellence is developing research to inform Australia's emergency response to infectious diseases.

The APPRISE CRE is an Australia-wide network of experts involved in medical, scientific, public health and ethics research. APPRISE is funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

APPRISE collaborating institutions are:

- The University of Melbourne
- The University of Sydney
- University of New South Wales
- Menzies School of Health Research
- Monash University

MEDIA RELEASE

- Deakin University
- Pathwest Laboratory Medicine WA
- Burnet Institute
- Australian Red Cross Blood Service
- University of Queensland
- University of Adelaide
- Hunter New England Population Health
- Central Queensland University.

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