

MJA/Wyeth Award 2005

The MJA/Wyeth Award 2005 for excellence in clinical research was awarded at the recent AMA National Conference in Adelaide in May 2006.

It was presented to Associate Professor Paul DR Johnson and his colleagues: Rhea Martin, Laurelle J Burrell, Elizabeth A Grabsch, Susan W Kirsas, Jason O’Keeffe, Barrie C Mayall, Deidre Edmonds, Wendy Barr, Christopher Bolger, Humsha Naidoo and M Lindsay Grayson for their research paper “Efficacy of an alcohol/chlorhexidine hand hygiene program in a hospital with high rates of nosocomial methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) infection”, published in the 21 November 2005 issue of *The Medical Journal of Australia*.

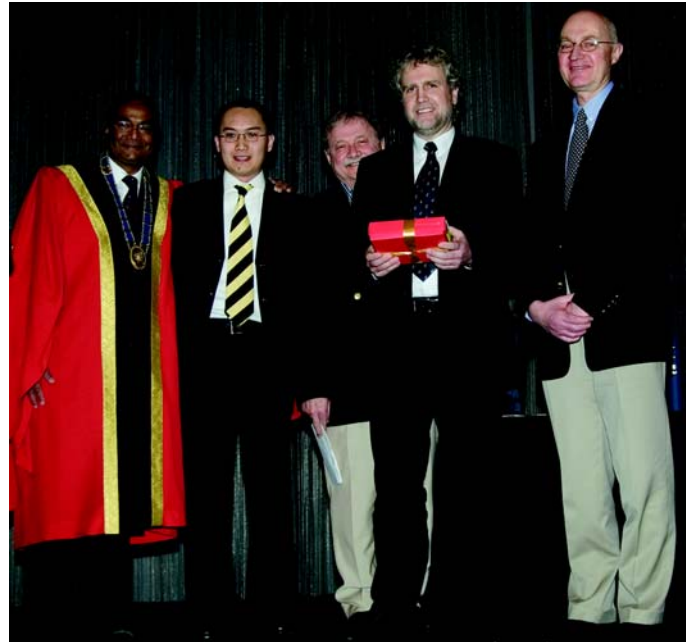
The team’s research addressed a problem that has plagued hospital practice since the 19th century — nosocomial infection, which, of late, has become more deadly, with the emergence of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.

Dr Johnson and his team introduced a multi-faceted hand hygiene program at Austin Health in Melbourne using an alcohol/chlorhexidine solution. Through their efforts and tenacity, Dr Johnson and his colleagues produced an increased compliance with hand hygiene by hospital staff with a concomitant reduction in hospital-wide MRSA isolates and patient episodes of MRSA bacteraemia.

Dr Michael Lee, Medical Director of Wyeth Australia, in presenting the Award, noted that:

“...This year, Wyeth was particularly interested to learn that the winning publication was to be the result of work in the infectious diseases arena. Globally, we have had a long association with this therapy area, and we have been able to contribute to it in collaboration with other stakeholders in this field of medicine.

...We are heartened by the fact that measures such as hand hygiene, an altered approach to shared equipment, education, and other ‘culture change’ initiatives can pay dividends in terms of infection rates and other parameters. The findings of the research team



AMA President, Dr Mukesh Haikerwal, Wyeth Australia Medical Director, Dr Michael Lee, MJA Editor, Martin Van Der Weyden, Associate Professor Paul Johnson and Professor Lindsay Grayson at the MJA/Wyeth Award presentation for 2005.

at the Austin have a direct impact on economic considerations and more importantly, on patient outcomes.

...Interestingly, the publication of the 2005 Award has highlighted the very fundamental concept that prevention is better than cure”.