

Around the universities and research institutes



James Cook University's

Professor Maxine Whittaker has been awarded the Royal Australasian College of Physicians International Medal for 2017. The medal, which was presented

at a ceremony in Melbourne on 7 May, acknowledges the significant contribution Professor Whittaker has made to health care in low- and middle-income countries over many years. Professor Whittaker is Dean, Public Health, Medical and Veterinary Sciences in the College of Public Health, Medical and Vet Sciences and the Deputy Director of the **Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine**. Professor Whittaker has lived and worked in Bangladesh, Zambia, Zimbabwe and PNG and has worked extensively in China, Fiji, Indonesia, Kenya, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tanzania, Thailand, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Vietnam, and other Pacific Island countries and territories. She has extensive experience in project and program design in health and development, especially in infectious diseases (including malaria) and reproductive health and health system reform for a variety of national governments, international development partners and NGO organisations. She is a member of faculty for the Science of Malaria Eradication course, part of a consortium of IS Global, Harvard School of Public Health and Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute. Professor Whittaker was educated at the **University of Queensland**, and the Harvard School of Public Health. She has won numerous awards, including the Dr Jerusha Jhirad Oration Award, University of Queensland Short Fellowship, and is a Life Member of the International Federation of Medical Students Association and an Honorary Life Member of the Australian Medical Students Association.

<https://www.jcu.edu.au/news/releases/2017/may/jcu-professors-remarkable-health-care-career-recognised>



Bond University has appointed leading French neuroscientist, Professor Irini Giannopulu, as Head of the School of Psychology, with a

view to her establishing a dedicated centre for the “artificial mind” at Bond’s Gold Coast campus. Professor Giannopulu was formerly Professor at the Pierre and Marie Curie University in Paris. She has a neuropsychology practice in Paris and is regarded as a leader in cognitive neuropsychology, in particular the interaction between the human brain and mind – and technology, including robots. A lot of Professor Giannopulu’s research has been on the use of robots as companions and assistants with children, with and without neurological disorders like autism. She has also conducted research into language acquisition in children and the early detection of learning difficulties and real and virtual spatial navigation in the context of healthy children and adults. She is a public and academic expert for the Swiss National Science Foundation and for the European Commission Human Brain project, and she holds several European research grants as principal researcher.

<https://bond.edu.au/news/49151/bond-university-appoints-leading-neuroscientist-research-artificial-mind>



A **Griffith University** pre-clinical trial to prove that a “nerve bridge” across a damaged spinal cord may be the answer to otherwise permanent paralysis has won a \$5 million

grant from the Queensland Government. In a science and health collaboration, the project, led by Dr James St John, will be conducted across two of the university’s leading research institutes, the **Griffith Institute for Drug Discovery** and the **Menzies Health Institute Queensland**. The pre-clinical trial will expand on the work led by current Australian of the Year and GRIDD biomedical scientist Professor Emeritus Alan Mackay-Sim who showed that transplanting olfactory cells from the nose into the spinal cord was safe in humans. The newly funded work will now use modern scientific approaches to produce a three-dimensional nerve bridge that can be transplanted into the spinal cord to promote regeneration across the injury site. The process for making the spinal cord bridges combines an advanced cell purification technique,

natural product drug discovery for cell activation and engineering of the nerve bridge. Following its surgical implantation, extensive long-term physiotherapy will be required to return as much sensation and movement to the patient as possible.

<https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/news/2017/05/10/griffith-secures-5m-to-help-cure-spinal-cord-injury/>



Dr C. Glenn Begley has been appointed as the inaugural CEO of BioCurate Pty Ltd, the \$80 million joint venture between **Monash University** and the **University of Melbourne**. According

to the Monash website, BioCurate “offers a new model, designed to address the key challenges in early stage drug development, and will focus on those stages of development before a project is attractive to big pharma or venture capital funds ... its purpose is to increase the number, quality and rate of translation of new drug discoveries into medically sound and commercially attractive, investable projects”. Dr Begley is a clinical haematologist and medical oncologist. He was Chief Scientific Officer at Akriveia Therapeutics, a Californian biotech company focused on discovering and developing the next generation of cancer immunotherapies. He was also a non-Executive Director for UK-based Oxford BioTherapeutics. His previous roles also include Chief Scientific Officer and Senior Vice-President, TetraLogic Pharmaceuticals (Pennsylvania); Vice-President and Global Head, Hematology and Oncology Research, Amgen (California); Executive Director, **Western Australian Institute of Medical Research** (Perth); and, Senior Principal Research Fellow and Professor of Medicine, **Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research**, University of Melbourne. Dr Begley studied Medicine at undergraduate and postgraduate level at The University of Melbourne.

<https://www.monash.edu/news/articles/ceo-appointed-to-new-medicines-discovery-venture,-biocurate-pty-ltd>

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