



Brad Hazzard
Minister for Health and Medical Research

MEDIA RELEASE

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\$25 MILLION RESEARCH FUND TO TACKLE COVID-19

The NSW Government is injecting \$25 million to fast-track statewide research and clinical trials to tackle the global COVID-19 pandemic and reduce its impact on the community.

NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard said the funds are part of about \$800 million in extra health funding by the NSW Government to bolster the health system.

“Already researchers in NSW have made huge inroads to improve diagnostics and potentially aid the eventual creation of a vaccine by growing the novel coronavirus,” Mr Hazzard said.

“The \$25 million funding boost will further assist the collaborative research efforts of clinicians, universities and research hubs with crucial roles in the NSW COVID-19 response”.

The funding will be directed to research focused on:

- accurate and timely diagnosis of COVID-19;
- support conducting COVID-19 clinical trials including vaccine trials;
- monitoring, developing and evaluating strategies to slow community transmission;
- developing and evaluating treatments for COVID-19;
- preventing the need for intensive medical care.
- minimising the impact of physical and psychological trauma on the community.

The \$25 million is on top of \$108 million already invested in medical research in 2019-2020 and will help ensure all research findings on COVID-19 can be implemented rapidly.

The extra funding will also support clinician-led research into the COVID-19 impacts on the healthcare workforce, vulnerable populations and regional, rural and remote communities.

Professor Anthony Kelleher, Director of the Kirby Institute at UNSW Sydney, said the institute is leading several research projects on COVID-19, including developing an antiviral therapy.

“The infectious disease expertise within the NSW medical research sector is truly world class, and we are eager to turn this investment into research that will transform this pandemic and ultimately save lives,” Professor Kelleher said.

NSW Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant said: “This funding will go a long way to progressing urgent research to minimise the health, social and economic impacts of COVID-19 in NSW.”

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Progress on research

- ICPMR Westmead was the first lab in Australia to develop and introduce a blood antibody test for tracking the spread of COVID-19 and is working with researchers from The National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance at Westmead and the Kirby Institute who will lead NSW studies of COVID-19 in schools, aged care, hospitals and the home.
- Westmead Institute researchers believe that they have found blood biomarkers that tell clinicians whether patients will need intensive care and are working with clinical trials experts from across NSW to integrate these markers in to critical studies of the course of COVID-19 and its transmissibility.
- Garvan and Kirby Institute researchers have developed a world-leading technology to identify the critical antibodies amongst the myriad produced by our immune cells when challenged by this virus - that could lead to a new treatments and diagnostic tests and are working with virology researchers at UNSW and Westmead
- University of Sydney researchers are at the forefront of research into how best to communicate information during epidemics prevent transmission of infection and into the psychological trauma that may result from managing this epidemic in Australia.