

Prof. Helen Marshall wins BioSpectrum Asia Lifetime Achievement Award 2022

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An International Leader in Vaccinology

Asia has, indeed, become the new hub for potential growth and innovation, with no signs of losing steam. To appreciate the Asian companies and individuals for their commendable performance and achievements during Calendar Year (CY) 2021, BioSpectrum Asia Excellence Awards 2022 ceremony was held at Lavender Ball Room, Hotel Fort Canning in Singapore on December 2, 2022, and Prof Helen Marshall received the Lifetime Achievement Award 2022.

With an extensive background in child health and immunisation research, Professor Helen Marshall is best known for leading the world's biggest study on meningococcal B disease. It involved providing the licensed Meningococcal B vaccine free to about 35,000 adolescents enrolled in years 10, 11 and 12 in schools across South Australia (SA), to help determine the impact of immunising large community groups against the disease.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Prof. Helen provided advice to the state's Health Minister and was cited as one of Australia's leading vaccination experts. Beginning in September 2020, she was the co-investigator at the University of Sydney in a Phase I human trial of a novel DNA-based COVID-19 vaccine developed by BioNet and Technovalia that could be administered without using a needle.

She is also part of a University of Queensland research team seeking to improve primary healthcare services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and is leading a study to provide free meningococcal B vaccinations to Northern Territory residents as she studies whether the vaccine can also provide protection against gonorrhoea.

In recognition of Prof Helen's research leadership, she was awarded 2022 SA Australian of the Year and 2022 SA Woman of the Year. In 2021 she was made a Fellow of the Australian Academy Health and Medical Sciences.

She is Professor in Vaccinology in the Adelaide Medical School, and Deputy Director, Clinical and Translational Research for the Robinson Research Institute at The University of Adelaide. She also holds the position of Senior Medical Practitioner and Medical Director, Vaccinology and Immunology Research Trials Unit (VIRTU), in the Department of Paediatrics at the Women's and Children's Hospital. In 2022 she was appointed as the inaugural Clinical Research Director of the Women's and Children's Health Network in Adelaide.

Professor Helen's research programme addresses urgent priorities in infectious disease prevention in children and includes implementation research and clinical trials in investigational and licensed vaccines, infectious and social epidemiology and public health. Her main interests include meningococcal, human papillomavirus, influenza and pertussis infections and their prevention by immunisation. Prof. Helen has been an investigator on 108 implementations, clinical and epidemiological studies.

Her research group, VIRTU, is the only research centre in Australia using social science research methodologies to investigate community attitudes to the introduction of new vaccines.

Her passion in children's health and vaccinology stems from the time spent during her medical degree on a paediatric ward in a hospital in Western Samoa where she saw first-hand the devastating effects of infectious diseases in a country low on medical resources. This inspired her to move into paediatrics, which led to an opportunity to work on clinical trials with vaccines to protect children against serious infections.

She completed a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery, Doctorate of Medicine, Master in Public Health and Diploma in Child Health at the University of Adelaide and the international Advanced Vaccinology Course at the Pasteur Merieux Institute, France.