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Health Research Council in New Zealand puts $4.3 M into University projects

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Multiple healthcare projects to focus on conditions such as respiratory illness, stroke, cardiovascular diseases etc.



More than $4.3 million from the Health Research Council in New Zealand will allow University of Auckland researchers to delve into a fascinating range of issues.

The largest grant of $1.4 million was made to Professor Cameron Grant, who is Head of the Department of Paediatrics, Child and Youth Health at the University and a paediatrician at Starship Hospital. He will assess the effectiveness of a new treatment, OM-85, to reduce hospital admissions for preschool children with recurring respiratory illnesses.

OM-85 is a bacterial lysate that can be taken orally to stimulate immune responses against viral infections and reduce inflammation associated with wheezing episodes. Trials suggest it reduces recurrent respiratory infections in children, but larger studies are needed to see whether it prevents wheeze-related hospitalisations.

To name a few other projects, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences research fellow Dr Eileen Gilder has been granted $837,705 for research to improve care after strokes. Better management of hyperglycaemia, fever, and swallowing dysfunction for 72 hours after stroke is known to reduce death and disability. Gilder also received $29,830 for a pilot project advancing health professionals' knowledge and understanding about links between human and planetary health.

Associate Professor Jichao Zhao, from the Auckland Bioengineering Institute, received $160,525 for research that aims to develop an artificial intelligence-driven electrocardiogram (ECG) to detect atrial fibrillation, a common heart condition that can cause stroke and heart failure.

Senior research fellow in pharmacology Dr Thomas Park has been granted $29,907 to establish a National Brain Tumour Registry. Auckland Bioengineering Institute research fellow Dr Weiwei Ai has been awarded $30,000 for a bioelectrical heart model that tests pacemaker clinical parameter settings. The project has generated interest from major device companies.