

15 December 2011

## HRC and the Ministry of Health invest in new research to halve the number of New Zealand smokers by 2020

The HRC and the Ministry of Health have made a joint investment in an innovative programme of research which will tackle the issue of smoking and tobacco-related harm in New Zealand. The research will provide the evidence required to reduce tobacco-related harm and support the Government's goal of a smokefree New Zealand by 2025.

The use of tobacco has a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders. Tobacco smoking is the single largest cause of preventable morbidity and mortality in New Zealand, with approximately 5000 deaths annually attributable to the effects of smoking or exposure to second-hand smoke.

Funding has been awarded for the establishment of a collaborative group of leading researchers in the tobacco control field, a Research Tūranga. The Research Tūranga will develop evidence to support a suite of innovative ways to effectively support New Zealanders to stop smoking in a relatively short period of time. The Tūranga will be led by University of Auckland researchers Associate Professor Chris Bullen of the Clinical Trials Research Unit and Dr Marewa Glover from the Centre for Tobacco Control Research and will involve researchers and collaborators from a range of organisations across New Zealand.

The Research Tūranga has been awarded \$5 million to undertake a range of projects, representing a well-considered and comprehensive approach that addresses the broad range of factors influencing tobacco use in New Zealand. Projects to be undertaken initially include investigating the use of a group stop smoking contest run within Māori and Pacific communities, pre-testing a nicotine tax, modelling the economic effects of a sinking lid policy for reducing tobacco dependency in smokers, and investigating implications for tobacco control contained within international trade agreements.

"This research is important because it has the potential to generate knowledge essential to reducing the numbers of New Zealanders smoking," says Dr Robin Olds, HRC Chief Executive.

“We've made significant progress in helping people stop smoking. Further research in this area will be used to help refine the tools we use to assist smokers in quitting,” says Karen Evison, National Programme Manager, Ministry of Health.

“The Tūranga is innovative also in that it tests a new funding model that builds in ability to develop new projects in response to policy and programme developments or to address gaps in knowledge identified as research results emerge.” says Dr Marewa Glover, Joint-Director of the Tūranga.

***The grand challenge: Innovative research to halve smoking prevalence in Aotearoa New Zealand***

48 months, \$5 million

**Principal Investigators: Associate Professor Christopher Bullen and Dr Marewa Glover**, Auckland UniServices Ltd, The University of Auckland

Dr Marewa Glover

Phone: 027 275 7852

**Project Summary:**

A group will form to undertake research that will inform how to halve smoking in New Zealand by 2020. Expert researchers from a range of disciplines and organisations, research-users and community representatives will form the Tūranga, a platform bringing us together to launch and achieve the goal. Multiple studies that explore new tobacco control ideas and test community-based interventions will be undertaken with some short studies returning results quickly. An extensive network of community, health and policy people will be communicated with to ensure research responds to their needs and to provide them with easily understood results. Studies will test innovative, practical ways to prompt widespread quitting reducing demand for tobacco, and ways to make tobacco harder to get. Reducing smoking among Māori and Pacific people and pregnant women is a priority. Mixed methods appropriate to answer the research question, and appropriate for working with the participants will be used.

**-Ends-**

For more information about the research project, please contact the researcher direct. The contact telephone number is above.

For information about how the HRC functions, please contact Dr Robin Olds, HRC Chief Executive, telephone: (09) 303 5204, mobile: 021 966 324, or email: [rolds@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:rolds@hrc.govt.nz); or Kristine Scherp, HRC Manager, Communications, telephone: (09) 303 5202 or email: [kscherp@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:kscherp@hrc.govt.nz).

**About the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC)**

The HRC is the Crown agency responsible for the management of the Government's investment in public good health research. Ownership of the HRC resides with the Minister of Health, with funding being primarily provided from Vote Research, Science and Technology. A Memorandum of Understanding between the two Ministers sets out this relationship.

Established under the Health Research Council Act 1990, the HRC's statutory functions include:

- advising the Minister and administering funds in relation to national health research policy
- fostering the recruitment, education, training, and retention of those engaged in health research in New Zealand
- initiating and supporting health research
- undertaking consultation to establish priorities in health research
- promoting and disseminating the results of health research to encourage their contribution to health science, policy and delivery
- ensuring the development and application of appropriate assessment standards by committees or subcommittees that assess health research proposals.