

Innovating and building evidence

\$7,087,823

invested in research and building evidence

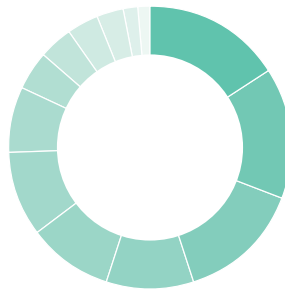
12

conferences supported,
aimed at converting
knowledge into practice

19

research fellows supported

Research breakdown



- Systems strengthening \$1,130,000
- Health inequalities \$1,051,400
- Discovery grants \$1,017,021
- Healthy eating \$698,851
- Sports \$693,830
- Other \$686,447
- Social inclusion \$532,090
- Discrimination \$311,099
- Violence \$292,560
- Tobacco \$250,525
- Alcohol \$209,000
- Economic participation \$115,000
- Active transport \$100,000

4

of our fellows are now
heads of department
at universities

85

research grants provided to build evidence across our
strategic priority areas



Innovating and building evidence: a case study

Research on the move

Technology moves faster and faster each day but the very quest for such advancement has led to the engineering of sitting into so many aspects of our daily life – a shift that has seen sedentary behaviour increase. As the amount of physical activity we engage in declines, our good health and wellbeing follows.

To counter this, traditional public health messages have focused on encouraging short bursts of physical exertion throughout our working week. As Head, Physical Activity, and VicHealth Research Fellow, Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes, Associate Professor David Dunstan believes that there is a better way.

His VicHealth-funded five-year fellowship focuses on understanding and influencing sedentary behaviour in Australian adults – behaviour that, for so many of us, fills in the majority of hours in our waking days. The ongoing research has already generated a significant amount of epidemiological evidence on the potentially harmful effects of prolonged sitting and other behaviours that have low-energy expenditure – examining the influence of such physical inactivity on the development of type 2 diabetes and obesity.

“As a VicHealth Public Health Research Fellow, this funding allows me to contribute 100% of my time to research,” A/Prof. Dunstan says in explaining how he has already been able to make numerous advances in the field since commencing his fellowship in 2006.

“It alleviates the stress of having to be involved in projects outside the fellowship and provides the security to pursue a dedicated research program over a five-year period rather than having to periodically search for funding on a year-by-year basis.”

To date, the VicHealth funding has enabled A/Prof. Dunstan to lead a collaborative research program, which has collectively published more than 20 scientific publications.

A cultural change, he says, is long overdue.

“What we identify is that it’s going to take a lot of factors,” A/Prof. Dunstan says. “Most people spend about seven or eight hours a day in their workplace and could be sitting down for long periods of the day. Just relying on people to change their individual behaviour will not work if an employer says ‘no, you can’t get up and move around’.”

Workplace environment, he says, is critical to better health for the future. Simple measures, such as the introduction of headsets to enable employees to move around while they talk on the phone, can make a big difference.

Boardroom-based progress meetings that once centred around long periods of time seated at a table could be undertaken on the move, with key players discussing relevant points as they move around a room or up and down corridors. Stationary bicycles positioned under desks or work stations can turn time spent answering emails into regular exercise.

“I feel optimistic about the future of the workplace being more activity-permissive,” A/Prof. Dunstan says. “The biggest barrier we have to break down is to provide evidence to employers that this could actually assist in productivity. There is already a substantial link between cardiovascular disease and obesity with a lack of productivity. So, if you can reduce workers’ sedentary behaviour, are they going to be more productive?”

Away from the workplace, A/Prof. Dunstan is also examining the impact of our sedentary leisure time, such as television viewing, but admits that is a more difficult issue to address.

“Telling people how to spend their leisure time is more challenging,” he says – good reason for more research to uncover more evidence and possible solutions. “It’s all about raising awareness.”

Innovating and building evidence

The importance of building evidence and supporting innovation for best practice in public health is emphasised in all VicHealth's program work. This means all of our health promotion programs foster innovative, evidence-based practice.

Program investments

The following are research projects that are focused on supporting innovation and building evidence for health promotion but are not tied to any major program area.

Cochrane Health Promotion and Public Health Field: Transition to Review Group *University of Melbourne* \$624,750

Funding to support the Cochrane Health Promotion and Public Health Field to move from a Field to a Review Group, and to incorporate the Campbell Collaboration. This transition, over five years, will improve the standard of health promotion and public health systematic reviews.

Community attitude surveys to policy issues *The Social Research Centre Pty Ltd* \$89,330

A series of population health surveys to gauge Victorian attitudes toward health policy options in alcohol harm reduction, food and nutrition policy, active transport and mental health and wellbeing. The principal aim of these surveys is to monitor public attitudes and opinions on a range of policy measures and to guide strategic imitative development.

East African communities' health partnership project *North Richmond Community Health Centre* \$10,000

This project is in response to Victorian East African communities' concern over the impact of the use of khat (*Catha edulis*) within their communities. It aims to assess the health and social effects of khat use in Australia.

Economic benefits of reducing disease risk factors *Deakin University* \$31,075

The purpose of this project is to identify the economic benefits of health promotion and disease prevention strategies, which lie both within and outside the health sector. Parameters for the analysis include reductions in the cost of healthcare and hospital admissions, increased labour force participation and reduced absenteeism, increased healthy time for non-work-related activities and increased quality of life.

Health, development and wellbeing of young children in Victoria *Deakin University* \$23,076

Dr Elizabeth Waters. This research will use epidemiological data on the health, development and wellbeing of young children in Victoria to review and develop evidence-based public health interventions in childhood.

Discovery Grants program

VicHealth has offered one-year grants to promote collaboration across disciplines, sectors and areas of expertise. These grants are specifically designed to support early exploration of novel research that has the potential for improving population health in Victoria.

This list should be cross-referenced with Discovery Grants listed under the specific health action areas.

Information communications technology (ICT) use and access in CALD communities for communicating on health and community wellbeing *Victoria University* \$37,500

Funding to conduct a comparative study of the Sudanese, Vietnamese and Pacific Island communities in metropolitan and regional communities, in order to identify potential uses of information technology to communicate and engage people in health promotion messages.

Listening to citizens' views about chronic disease prevention and health promotion *Monash University* \$37,217

Funding for the conduct of two deliberative forums in a metropolitan and regional centre of Victoria in order to evaluate an innovative method for identifying citizens' detailed views in relation to chronic disease prevention and health promotion.

Using text messaging to promote health issues to young people: a randomised controlled trial *Burnet Institute* \$34,296

Funding to conduct a randomised, controlled trial in which young people will receive a series of text messages about either safer sex or sun protection. The study aims to establish high-level evidence about the effectiveness of SMS to increase knowledge and promote behavioural change in a general population of young people aged 16–29.

Link and Learn program

This program is aimed at providing the opportunity to facilitate 'Research to Practice' activity by assisting community-based organisations to access external expertise to work with them on local projects utilising evidence-based health promotion strategies.

Binge and Cringe – a rural community reduction strategy to reduce harm from alcohol consumption *Echuca Regional Health* \$10,000

The aim of this project is to build capacity within the Shire of Campaspe to implement an Action Plan to address issues with alcohol misuse.

Feasibility Study: FEAST (Family Eating and Socialising Together) *Time for Youth* \$10,000

The project will investigate methods that encourage and make it easier for 'vulnerable' families to eat healthy food together. The project will examine possible benefits from both healthy food and healthy family time.

Local Government advocacy for women's health *Women's Health Loddon Mallee* \$10,000

Primary prevention of violence against women is poorly understood. This project will clearly define strong partnerships in primary prevention activities to identify needs, measure and as well as monitor the success of the projects annually over the next three years to ultimately strengthen the positioning across the region.

Making integrated health promotion culturally inclusive in the Sunraysia region

Sunraysia Community Health Services Inc (SCHS)

\$9,500

The project will engage external experts to conduct professional education and mentoring in the Sunraysia region to assist SCHS health promotion staff and other relevant agencies to engage the local CALD communities in health promotion initiatives aimed at improving nutrition and participation in physical activity.

Maribyrnong Being Active Eating (MBAE)

Western Region Health Centre

\$10,000

This demonstration project targets 12 to 18 year olds who live, work, study or recreate in the City of Maribyrnong. It will be implemented across multiple settings, including schools, community organisations and recreation venues, targeting an increase in access to healthy food and participation in sport and recreation.

Newly arrived social connectedness needs assessment and plan development

Dianella Community Health

\$10,000

Dianella Community Health (DCH) has recently completed a review of its health promotion practice and has identified several areas for improvement. This project aims to address the barriers and constraints the organisation faces in achieving best practice in health promotion.

Research program grants

The program funding is aimed at trialling an innovative idea, researching a new concept or methodology, or developing better supporting evidence relevant to the theory, policy and practice of health promotion.

Drinking cultures and social occasions: alcohol harms in the context of major public holidays, sporting and cultural events

Turning Point Alcohol & Drug Centre

\$94,400

The Kids in Communities Study: measuring community -level factors influencing children's development

Centre for Community Child Health – Murdoch Children's Research Institute

\$107,400

Mitigating negative health outcomes of precarious housing

Hanover Welfare Services

\$90,000

Healthy eating and food security issues with Victorian Aboriginal communities

Victoria University

\$107,500

Enhancing participation in sport and physical activity by first-generation migrant communities at a high risk of cardiovascular disease

University of Ballarat

\$107,500

Victorian food supply scenarios – impacts on availability of healthy, nutritious and sustainable diets

Australian Centre for Science, Innovation and Society, University of Melbourne

\$107,500

Community connections: how can technology promote community social inclusion?

McCaughey Centre, University of Melbourne

\$107,500

Connected lives: deploying virtual worlds, the Internet and free media software to connect young people isolated by disability, geography and socio-economic disadvantage

Victoria University

\$102,800

Exploring alcohol use in pregnancy: what questions should we be asking?

Murdoch Children's Research Institute

\$105,032

The growth of alcohol outlets in Victoria 1991–2007: socio-economic and demographic drivers

Turning Point Alcohol & Drug Centre

\$44,500

Centres of Excellence in Research and Practice

A prime goal of VicHealth centres is to translate public health research knowledge into health promotion practice.

Centres carry out research that fills an identified gap in current research and practice activity and contributes to national and state health policy objectives.

VicHealth currently supports, at varying levels, three Centres of Excellence in Research and Practice, listed under the major program areas of mental health and wellbeing, tobacco control and health inequalities.

Research Fellowships

VicHealth supports outstanding public health/health promotion research by awarding Senior and Public Health Research Fellowships. Each Fellow is funded for five years.

During the 2008–09 financial year, 19 fellowships were funded by VicHealth; some are listed here and others under the major program areas.

Breaking generational cycles of mental disorder: a prospective study of the offspring of the Victorian Adolescent Health Cohort Study

Murdoch Children's Research Institute

\$105,000

Dr Craig Olsson. This longitudinal study aims to identify modifiable causes of perpetuating cycles of depression, alcoholism and violence across generations of around 2000 Victorians aged 14 to 26 years old.

Key highlights

6

community organisations funded through our Link and Learn program to facilitate local translation of research into practice

\$1m

invested in Discovery Grants to support innovative research across our strategic priorities

29

centres of excellence in research and practice received our ongoing support

Is it possible to prevent harmful youth substance use and enhance mental health by encouraging pro-social behaviour in children and young people?

Deakin University

\$125,000

A/Prof. John Toumbourou.

This fellowship explores pro-social behaviour in children and young people, and the role this behaviour plays in substance abuse, prevention and mental health promotion.

Men, sexuality and health: new issues, new directions

La Trobe University

\$165,000

A/Prof. Gary Dowsett. This fellowship investigates men's sexual health in Victoria by looking at the connections between masculinity, sexuality and health through the analyses of men's body transformations, changes in their sexual relationships, and the use of sexual technologies.

The climate change and biodiversity health effects research fellowship

Monash University

Sustainability Institute

\$125,520

The key objective of the research fellowship is building knowledge and an evidence base concerning the effects of climate change and the decline of biodiversity on health.

Scholarships

VicHealth supports young researchers by providing Public Health PhD Research Scholarships and other scholarships.

This list should be cross-referenced with PhD Scholarships listed under the specific health action areas.

Australian women's childbearing decisions: the role of gender beliefs, psychosocial and health factors

University of Melbourne

\$10,004

Ms Sara Holton. Funding to investigate the contributions of gender beliefs, psychosocial factors and health variables to the childbearing decisions of contemporary Australian women.

Conference Support

Through the Conference Support scheme, VicHealth provides limited support to conferences conducted by other providers to facilitate knowledge transfer in the field of health promotion. This program aims to ensure these conferences are accessible to a range of delegates and to increase information exchange across sectors.

All conferences supported are listed below and right. Each relates to one of our strategic action areas.

5th Australasian Drug Strategy Conference

Victoria Police

\$10,000

Beyond the Refugee Journey: showcasing best-practice settlement models and refugee achievements

Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES)

\$10,000

Community Inclusion: what is it and how do we know when it is working? An organisation and community perspective

City of Greater Bendigo

\$6,000

Gippsland Health Promotion – It's Best Practice

Gippsland Women's Health

Service Inc

\$6,000

Healthy Farms, Healthy Food, Healthy People

Agribusiness Gippsland Inc

\$10,000

Policy About Us, For Us!: A Practical Revolution in the Lives of People with Disabilities

Australian Federation of

Disability Organisations

\$5,000

SSMART (Surviving Substance Misuse & Alcohol Risk Taking) ANSWERS2 – How can we talk about alcohol?

City of Ballarat

\$8,000

Strengthening Communities through Sustainable and Healthy Approaches – Campaspe Conference

Shire of Campaspe

\$10,000

Re-generating Community: arts, community and governance

Cultural Development Network Inc

\$10,000

Rural Forum

The ALSO Foundation

\$7,000

The Role of Arts in Times of Crises

Regional Arts Victoria

\$10,000

Youth Mental Health: A Global Health and Social Challenge

University of Melbourne

\$8,000