



MEDIA RELEASE

NeuRA LEADS RESEARCH COLLABORATION TO DECODE BIPOLAR DISORDER WITH \$2.46MILLION GRANT

Tuesday 5th, September 2017: A collaborative research project led by Dr Jan Fullerton, a Senior Research Scientist at Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA), has received a \$2.46 million funding grant announced today by Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research Brad Hazzard and Minister for Mental Health Tanya Davies.

The funding comes courtesy of the latest round of NSW Genomics Collaborative Grants which will see Dr Fullerton lead a team of researchers across NeuRA, the Black Dog Institute, UNSW, the Prince of Wales Hospital, and gain access to genome sequencing facilities at the Garvan Institute.

In Australia alone, 250,000 people are affected by bipolar disorder. Current treatments are highly variable for the severe and debilitating psychiatric condition and the specific genetic causes have remained largely obscure.

This study will conduct whole genome sequencing of close to 1,200 individuals across NSW with bipolar disorder, to identify the molecular pathways which increase risk of illness.

Dr Fullerton highlighted the unique study will contribute to existing international collaborations to further gene discovery efforts, improving understanding of the causes of this complex and highly heritable genetic condition.

"Bipolar disorder is most commonly treated with lithium, but this is only effective for 30% of patients," Dr Fullerton said.

"Unlocking the genetic code of bipolar disorder and using pharmacogenomics studies to examine the individual genes and genetic signatures that may predict responsiveness to commonly used treatments are critical for improving the quality of life of people affected by this severe and devastating condition.

"This research could enhance capacity for personalised medicine, potentially enabling the identification of individual patients who would benefit from specific treatments based on their genetic makeup."

Minister for Mental Health Tanya Davies said people who live with bipolar disorder can face a range of issues, including reduced life expectancy due to increased risk of suicide and higher rates of cardiovascular disease.

“The NSW Government is pleased to be part of a project that will ultimately support people living with bipolar disorder, find better ways to treat the illness, and establish our state as a national and international leader in genomic medicine,” Mrs Davies said.

The study will utilise over 10 years of health-record data from the Sax Institute’s 45 and Up Study which is the largest cohort study of healthy ageing in Australia, comprising over 267,000 individuals.

While NSW government funding allows for the genomic sequencing in the study, the research will require additional funding to support the costs of sample collection, DNA extraction and downstream analysis in order to complete the research.

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