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MEDIA RELEASE

RESEARCH GRANT SUCCESS

H1N1 INFLUENZA 09 MEDICAL RESEARCH PROJECTS FAST-TRACKED

The College of Emergency Nursing Australasia is delighted to advise that a national research study entitled '*Emergency Department impact and patient profile of H1N1 Influenza 09 outbreak in Australia: A national survey*' has been successful in receiving a grant of \$106,136.

<i>Title</i>	<i>Chief Investigators</i>	<i>Associate Investigators</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Funding Body</i>
Emergency Department impact and patient profile of H1N1 Influenza 09 outbreak in Australia: A national survey	FitzGerald GJ Shaban RZ Arbon P Aitken P Considine J Clark M	Finucane J McCarthy S Cloughessy L Holzhauser K	\$106, 136	National Health and Medical Research Council

Emergency Departments (EDs) are at the forefront of Australia's health disaster response; providing immediate patient care and system wide patient facilitation. The recent outbreak of H1N1 Influenza 09 has demonstrated the diversity of roles of EDs in disease containment and management but also provides an opportunity to describe the extended clinical impact of pandemic disease. The outbreak has had a significant impact on EDs with large numbers of patients presenting with flu-like illness. This impact has occurred at a time when EDs confront continual problems of overcrowding associated with Access Block and growing demand. The survey of emergency departments will be completed within six months. Emergency Departments will be asked about how they managed the people with flu-like symptoms when they arrived, in terms of masks, quarantine and the impact on staff, so that this information can inform future policy, planning and response management for pandemic.

This project is highly significant for developing Australia's management of pandemics. A clearer understanding of the full impact of the disease on Emergency Departments and the strategies taken by EDs to manage the outbreak is essential to better inform health system policy, planning and preparedness. The extension of this pandemic into the northern hemisphere winter is likely to have a significant impact on community health as well as on health services. A detailed understanding of the broader burden of the disease, along with the response strategies required within EDs, will help prepare health systems to cope with the potential impact.

Under the leadership of Professor Gerry FitzGerald, the study is a collaborative endeavour of three universities (Queensland University of Technology, Griffith University and James Cook University) and the three peak emergency medicine and nursing Colleges in Australia, the College of Emergency Nursing Australasia (CENA), the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM), and the Australian College of Emergency Nursing (ACEN). The College of Emergency Nursing Australasia would like to acknowledge Mr Ramon Shaban, one of the Chief Investigators, for his role in initiating the development of this study.

The grant was one of 41 Australian research projects that will help ensure the Australian Government's response to the evolving threat of H1N1 is based on the most up-to-date information available, and help the Government tailor its response to the spread and nature of the disease, and better equip the Government to help those most at risk. \$7 million has been provided for these projects from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). NHMRC has fast-tracked a robust international peer review of applications for medical research grants to identify the critical projects that would best shed more light on H1N1. This process can normally take many months, however NHMRC achieved this within one week through involvement of highly experienced researchers from Australia, Singapore, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The quick, collaborative international response seeks to take advantage of the current Australian flu season to learn much more about the virus. The results will be shared internationally, and will be particularly valuable for those countries who are currently preparing for their coming flu season. Researches will report their findings at a symposium in December 2009 attended by the Chief Medical Officers of Australia and each state and territory, as well as public health experts¹.

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¹ NHMRC Media Release dated 8th July 2009. <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/media/media/rel09/090708-h1n1-fast-track.htm>