

Scientists Receive \$1 million Fellowships at AusBiotech Annual Conference Dinner

Tonight, at the 2008 Dinner for the AusBiotech Conference in Melbourne, two world class Australian researchers were awarded the Pfizer Australia Research Fellowships, worth \$1 million each.

These funding covers a 5 year period, supporting salary, start-up and travel expenses. The Fellowship program focuses on helping Australia's best and brightest young academics become true leaders in biomedical research.

Pfizer Australia Research Fellowships aim to encourage leaders in biomedical research to establish a career in Australia, fostering the continued development of Australia as a source of world-class scientific innovation and ideas.

Australia has benefited significantly from having a strong and internationally competitive scientific community. Continued investment in this resource is essential to the future progress of our industry and Australia.

The Pfizer Australia Research Fellowship invests in Australian science by providing grants to outstanding biomedical scientists so they may commit to a research career locally. The Fellowships are awarded to individual scientists of demonstrated capability, with significant future potential to attain leadership in their chosen field of research. These Fellowships allow successful applicants to continue their program of research at an Australian university or research institution, by providing a 5-year grant covering salary, travel and other establishment costs.

The 2008 Winners of the Pfizer Fellowships – presented with their awards at tonight's AusBiotech dinner are:

Dr Paul Gregorevic

Dr Paul Gregorevic is a muscle biologist, whose main interest is understanding the mechanisms of skeletal muscle adaptation, and their roles in serious illness. Having begun his career at the University of Melbourne, he has returned to Australia having been an Acting Assistant Professor at The University of Washington in Seattle, where he headed an independent research lab and the mouse physiology facility within the Paul D Wellstone Muscular Dystrophy Co-operative Research Centre – the first NIH funded center for cutting edge research into the causes and

treatment of serious neuromuscular disorders. As of this year, Dr Gregorevic relocated his research program in muscle biology and therapeutics development to the Baker/IDI Research

Institute in Melbourne to combine his expertise with the advanced approaches being developed by eminent scientists in the Australian community.



Dr Paul Thomas

Dr Paul Thomas is a Developmental Geneticist at the School of Molecular and Biomedical Science, University of Adelaide. The overall aim of Dr Thomas's research is to understand the function of genes that cause neurodevelopmental disorders through the generation and analysis of knock-out and transgenic mouse models.

Dr Thomas is studying the developmental and genetic basis of mammalian neurogenesis through the generation of mouse models for X-linked Mental Retardation (MR) syndromes. Most recently, Dr Thomas has pioneered research into the genetic basis of X-linked Hypopituitarism, and shown that this MR syndrome is caused by altered dosage of the CNS transcription factor SOX3. His group has generated clinically-relevant mouse models that are beginning to provide detailed understanding of the mechanism of vertebrate neurogenesis and the molecular pathology of XH.

The Pfizer Australia Research Fellowship awarded to Dr Thomas provides critical support for this important area of research, and in the longer term will allow Dr Thomas to expand his research program to include novel X-linked MR genes. Ultimately, these studies will generate a detailed portrait of the developmental and molecular mechanisms that lead to impaired neurodevelopment in mice and man and provide a unique resource for the development of novel therapeutic options for patients with MR.

For further information on the AusBiotech Conference contact Tania Ewing on 0408378422