

Media Release

Centre for Brain Research
The University of Auckland



12 October 2009

New research centre combines forces on brain disease

A new research centre at The University of Auckland that aims to develop treatments for brain disease will be launched on 6 November 2009.

The Centre for Brain Research, led by renowned University of Auckland neuroscientist Professor Richard Faull, will investigate diseases of the brain and nervous system including stroke, epilepsy, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease, multiple sclerosis, motor neurone disease, and muscular dystrophy.

"Stroke is the third leading cause of death in this country and around one in five New Zealanders will experience brain disease in their lifetime," says Professor Faull. "The social and financial costs of these conditions are enormous."

"More integrated and collaborative research is essential, and that's why we think the Centre for Brain Research is such an exciting and important development. It is founded on a partnership between scientists, doctors and the community, with each group contributing its own perspective and expertise."

The Centre brings together scientists from The University of Auckland with neurologists and neurosurgeons from District Health Boards in the Auckland region and community groups that support people affected by brain disease.

Doctors and scientists will work closely together, consulting on the direction that research should take and sharing their results and ideas. Young neurologists and neurosurgeons will receive more training in research, and young scientists will have greater clinical exposure. Ultimately it is hoped that these connections will fast-track the transfer of scientific advances from the laboratory to the clinic.

More than 200 researchers from across the University will tackle different aspects of the research. Many will be housed in a cluster of world-class laboratories recently installed at Grafton Campus, close to clinicians and patients at Auckland Hospital.

The majority of neurologists and neurosurgeons in the Auckland region are involved, and neurologist Professor Alan Barber, Head of Stroke Services at Auckland District Health Board, is Deputy Director of the Centre.

"Research is a fundamental part of our work and enhances clinical care" says Professor Barber. "By becoming an integral part of the Centre for Brain Research we can expand and develop our clinical trials programme and, working alongside scientists, more effectively target our research and treatments to improve patient care."

"The neurologists and neurosurgeons from Auckland District Health Board alone care for more than a third of all New Zealanders, so our work as part of the Centre will have far-reaching implications."

Support groups that liaise with patients and their families will also play a key role in the research. Through consultation with community groups, scientists and clinicians will improve their understanding of neurological conditions, ensure that their work addresses the needs of people affected, and share the results of their research.

“Our relationships with patients and families are vital for our success” says Professor Faull. “Our community partners enable us to do groundbreaking research as well as providing hope to the thousands of people affected by neurological disease.”

The Centre for Brain Research will be officially opened by the Hon Dr Wayne Mapp, Minister of Research, Science and Technology, at an event on Friday 6 November 2009 at The University of Auckland’s Grafton Campus.

As the Centre opens its doors, some of the latest research generating excitement includes the discovery of stem cells in adult human brain tissue affected by epilepsy, new speech therapy and rehabilitation techniques for patients affected by stroke, and a trial of a treatment that may improve brain function in people with Huntington’s disease.

Contact

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Launch event

Date: Friday 6 November 2009
Time: 12:30 pm - 2 pm
Venue: Level 5, 501, Grafton Campus, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences,
The University of Auckland, 85 Park Road, Auckland
**Please contact Laura Fogg if you would like to attend the launch event.

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Notes

The Centre for Brain Research is supported by The University of Auckland Vice-Chancellor’s fund. Scientists and clinicians working with the Centre also receive their own research funding from a variety of Government, commercial and philanthropic sources.

Professor Richard Faull

Professor Richard Faull is Director of the Centre for Brain Research and Professor of Anatomy at the University of Auckland. He is Director of the Neurological Foundation of New Zealand Human Brain Bank, a facility that houses donated brains and brain tissue and is a critical facility for the Centre for Brain Research.

He is an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit, and recipient of the Health Research Council of New Zealand's Liley Medal and the Royal Society of New Zealand's Rutherford Medal. He is Patron of Alzheimers Auckland Inc the Alzheimers New Zealand Charitable Trust, and Huntington's Disease Association (Auckland) Inc.

Professor Alan Barber

Professor Alan Barber is Deputy-Director of the Centre for Brain Research and a practising neurologist. He is the head of the Stroke Service at Auckland District Health Board, the holder of the Neurological Foundation Chair in Clinical Neurology and will be the 2010 Secretary for the Australian and New Zealand Association of Neurologists. He is the Medical Advisor to the Stroke Foundation (Northern Region).