

UQ celebrates its female researchers

7 March 2014

As the world prepares to celebrate annual International Women’s Day tomorrow, The University of Queensland is celebrating the groundbreaking research of three of its leading female early-career researchers.

Their research encompasses areas as diverse as using spider venom to help pets fight parasites, understanding how media influences aid responses to natural disasters, and rehabilitating children with cerebral palsy.

Dr Margaret Hardy, Dr Emma Hutchison and Dr Leanne Sakzewski were awarded UQ fellowships that support high-calibre women to re-establish their academic research careers after an interruption, often the birth of children.

Dr Hardy, from UQ’s [Institute for Molecular Bioscience](#), has received a full-time UQ Postdoctoral Research Fellowship for Women to investigate the potential of proteins isolated from spider venoms to kill parasites such as fleas and ticks.

“ Ectoparasites, which live on the outside of an animal, have developed widespread resistance to existing insecticides, meaning there is an urgent need for improved solutions to parasite infestation,” Dr Hardy said.

“ I have identified two new compounds from the venom of the Australian tarantula that show promise in killing the insect pests that plague pets and livestock.”

“ I will determine how effective these compounds are against a range of insect pests and if they are safe to be applied to animals.”

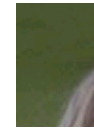
Dr Emma Hutchison, from the [School of Political Science and International Studies](#), received a part-time UQ Postdoctoral Fellowship for Women to examine how a series of natural catastrophes from 2003-2012 were visually represented through the media and in turn, generated very different humanitarian aid responses.

Dr Hutchison’s project aims to better understand how patterns of visualising devastation and human suffering help to shape the emotional reactions and moral judgments which assist in mobilising humanitarian aid.

“ My project will provide a comprehensive appreciation of how culture and specifically cultural difference mitigates emotions associated with viewing catastrophe, and how these emotions in turn condition humanitarian responsibilities,” Dr Hutchison said.

By the end of her fellowship, Dr Hutchison intends to write up her results through a series of articles and her second single-authored book.

Dr Sakzewski, from the [Queensland Cerebral Palsy and Rehabilitation Research Centre](#) at UQ’s School of Medicine, will explore how to improve the rehabilitation of children with impaired upper



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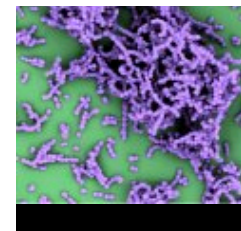
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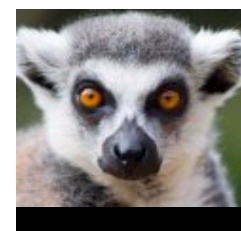
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limb function.

She received a Graduate Women's Award from the Fellowships Fund Incorporated, a group of graduate women committed to providing postgraduate opportunities for study and research to women by providing fellowships.

Dr Sakzewski's research builds on preliminary work from a NHMRC TRIP (Translating Research into Practice) Fellowship (2012-2013) aimed at improving the quality and dose of therapy offered to children with unilateral cerebral palsy to improve their arm and hand function.

" My project will determine the effectiveness of a research translation program for occupational therapists working with children with cerebral palsy to increase the use of current research and " best practice" leading to improved patient outcomes," Dr Sakzewski said.

By the end of the fellowship, she aims to publish results through a number of articles, and develop training resources for occupational therapists to support their use of research evidence in clinical practice.

Saturday March 8 is International Women's Day, dedicated to celebrating the political, social and economic achievements of women. UQ will mark the event with a seminar on Tuesday, March 18. More details are available [here](#).

Media: UQ's Institute for Molecular Bioscience Communications Manager Bronwyn Adams, +61 7 3346 2134, +61 418 575 247, b.adams@imb.uq.edu.au, UQ Faculty of Humanities and Social Science Marketing and Engagement Manager Melinda Kopanakis, +61 7 3365 2632, m.kopanakis@uq.edu.au, and Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences Senior Communications and Marketing Officer Kate Gadenne, +61 7 3346 3036, 0438 727 895, k.gadenne@uq.edu.au

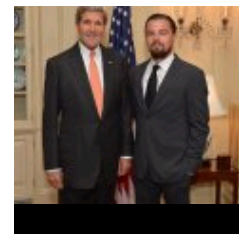
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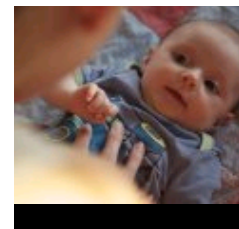
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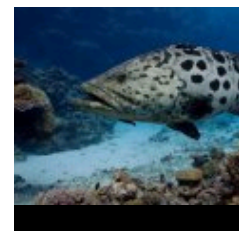
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