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Under strict embargo until 6:30pm (AEDT)

Groundbreaking immunisation researcher Professor Christopher Goodnow wins Ramaciotti Medal

A scientist who made a major breakthrough in understanding how the immune system is controlled has been awarded the prestigious Ramaciotti Medal for Excellence in Biomedical Research and a \$50,000 grant, it was announced today.

The medal will be presented to the Australian National University's Professor Christopher Goodnow at the annual Ramaciotti Awards tonight, where Perpetual will distribute \$1.6 million in funding to Australian biomedical researchers.

Prof. Goodnow's research is focused on understanding how the immune system is controlled so that it does not attack our own organs and tissues when it repels invading bacteria and viruses. This will enable scientists to develop more effective drugs for treatment of a wide range of conditions, from infectious diseases to diabetes and cancer.

In his research, Prof. Goodnow discovered the immune system is controlled by a series of checkpoints acting at each stage in the mobilisation of an immune response, much as a series of passwords and keys regulate each step in a missile launch to prevent "friendly fire".

"We have been able to reveal the rules of engagement that govern our immune system, ensuring that our own unique pattern of tissue antigens is not mistaken for the pattern of molecules displayed by a virus or bacteria. Now that we know many of the control mechanisms the body uses normally, it opens up the translational steps: figuring out why the rules have been bent or broken in autoimmune diseases, allergy, or chronic infection, and developing drugs that harness those normal mechanisms to improve the success of transplant rejection or cancer treatment."

"Winning the Ramaciotti Medal is a great honour, especially since past funding from the Ramaciotti Foundation and other Perpetual philanthropic trusts like the Nancy E Pendergast Charitable Trust Fund has played a pivotal role in initiating critical new steps in my medical research career," he said.

The Ramaciotti Medal carries an award of \$50,000 and recognises outstanding contribution to clinical or biomedical research, or the way in which healthcare is delivered. The nominee must still be actively engaged in research and must have previously received support from the Ramaciotti Foundations. High profile past winners include Professor Sam Berkovic, Professor Chris Parish, Professor Thomas Martin, Professor Robert Baxter, Professor Ian Frazer and Professor Geoff McFadden.

Andrew Thomas, General Manager, Philanthropy at Perpetual, which manages the charitable trust, said that the Ramaciotti Medal is an important way to recognise Australian scientists who are involved in world leading biomedical research.

"There are so many passionate and committed biomedical researchers working to improve our health, beat diseases and create better treatments, yet funding is limited. The Ramaciotti

Foundations are able to support innovative, 'out of the box' research that may not attract mainstream funding.

"The winner of the Ramaciotti Medal provides a great example of where such research can lead, and the huge impact that philanthropic giving can make - well beyond an initial donation," he said.

Managed by Perpetual, the Ramaciotti Foundations were established in 1970 with a \$6.7 million bequest, which has now grown to \$52 million (as at 31 August 2010), more than seven times the original sum. Over the past 40 years, the Foundations have distributed around \$48.5 million to biomedical research.

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About the Ramaciotti Foundations

The Ramaciotti Foundations are collectively one of the largest private contributors to biomedical research in Australia having granted more than \$48.5 million to research projects since 1970.

Managed by Perpetual Trustee Company Limited, The Foundations began with \$6.7 million with the first major grant going to the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in 1971. This assisted with the establishment of a new building called the Clive and Vera Ramaciotti Research Laboratories.

Since then, the Foundations have donated more than \$48.5 million to biomedical research and are one of the largest contributors to the field. Their combined capital now stands at over \$52 million – a significant amount considering they began with only \$6.7 million.

The Ramaciotti Foundations continue to support biomedical research and each year make significant distributions via the [Ramaciotti Awards](#), providing assistance to areas such as molecular biology, genetics and immunology, and assisting young investigators taking up new challenges in biomedical research.

About the Ramaciotti Medal for Excellence in Biomedical Research

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About the Ramaciotti Establishment and Major Equipment Grants

Establishment Grants - Establishment Grants are intended to provide short term research support for a young investigator who is taking, or has taken up a new position in an institution. The maximum amount for this gift is \$75,000.

Major Equipment Grants - Major Equipment Grants are intended to provide funding of up to \$75,000 towards the purchase of a single item of equipment costing \$75,000 or more.

About the Ramaciotti Biomedical Research Award

This \$1 million award is open to groups or individuals undertaking a single initiative in biomedical research within Australian universities, public hospitals, medical research institutes or other similar organisations. Traditionally, it funds a need that would not attract funding elsewhere. This award is presented every two years and will next be awarded in 2011.

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