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International Day of Women and Girls in Science – 11 February

Some of the Australian women making a difference

Australian scientists, in particular women in medical research, are making a difference to all of us.

The latest annual Viertel Foundation Awards included several grants to trailblazing female scientists.

For example, Dr Jaclyn Pearson of the Hudson Institute of Medical Research at Monash University and Dr Jennifer Zenker at Monash University's Australian Regenerative Medicine Institute each received \$1.375 million over five years to support their work.

The funds will help the progress of vital research in the areas of cancer, stem cells, dementia and infection responsiveness.

Dr Pearson's research will uncover how antibiotic resistance is driving the ability of microbes to cause more severe disease, with the aim of identifying new therapeutic approaches to beat life-threatening superbug infections.

Dr Zenker's research aims to find out more about pluripotent stem cells which develop into highly specialised cells of the adult body, performing a vast range of functions. These highly specialised cells have the potential to revolutionise regenerative medicine by harnessing and redirecting cells through the use of innovative live imaging and non-invasive light-inducible drugs.

"It's a timely reminder, particularly as we approach International Day of Women and Girls in Science on 11 February, that women have so much to offer in the areas of scientific and medical research," said Jodi Kennedy, General Manager of Charitable Trusts and Philanthropy at Equity Trustees, the manager and one of the trustees of the Viertel Foundation.

Since establishment, the Viertel Foundation has awarded a total of 61 Senior Medical Research Fellowships and 149 Clinical Investigator awards, ensuring ongoing research for important medical and health conditions, and the treatments needed for them.

"The Foundation committed to gender equity a few years ago in the awarding of the grants and fellowships - with the express purpose of supporting mid-career women scientists," said Ms Kennedy

"The alumni of the medical research granting program are a showcase of excellence in the pursuit of clinical and therapeutic responses to health and medical conditions affecting millions of people."

Alumni of the Senior Medical Fellowships can be found [here](#), and the Clinical Investigators Awards [here](#). More about the Sylvia and Charles Viertel Foundation is available [here](#).

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