

MEDIA RELEASE

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NATIONAL ASTHMA WEEK / 1 – 7 SEPTEMBER 2010

The Asthma Foundation of SA provides a \$25,000 grant to Early Career Researcher

A person can survive for weeks without food, days without water, but only minutes without air. Over 2 million Australians have **asthma** and many can quickly find themselves struggling to breathe. Unfortunately many people don't recognise asthma symptoms or realise how serious asthma can be ... and **it's about time** they do ...

To celebrate National Asthma Week 2010, the Asthma Foundation of SA will present the inaugural ***Marjory Edwards Early Career Research Grant*** of \$25,000 to **Dr Violet Mukaro** from the Lung Research Laboratory at the Hanson Institute.

The award will be presented to Dr Mukaro by the Governor of South Australia, His Excellency Kevin Scarce AC CSC RANR at a Reception held at Government House on Thursday 2nd of September 2010 at 3pm.

Having completed her high-school education in Zimbabwe in 2000, Dr Mukaro moved to Adelaide to study Immunology (earning Honours and a PhD). With a love for Australia, she has said that living in Adelaide has allowed her to excel in completing her studies and working in the field of respiratory health.

“In the relatively short time I've been here, I've been able to focus on completing my studies. I have always wanted to work in medicine ... I love the challenge of science, and feeling like I am always learning something”.

Dr Mukaro currently works as a second year post-doctoral researcher at the Lung Research Lab at the Hanson Institute at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. Violet's research project is titled ***Mannose binding lectin and galectin-3 – using lessons from COPD to improve macrophage function in non-eosinophilic asthma.***

In lay terms, Dr Mukaro's research will focus on a severe form of asthma, which is often less responsive to traditional preventer medications. She plans to recruit 20 people with this type of asthma, and use the less invasive approach of using sputum to obtain lung cells rather than the more invasive bronchoscopy procedure.

Research within the Lung Research Lab has found that certain lung cells and their functions are changed in the severe form of asthma to a similar extent as in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) / Emphysema. Dr Mukaro plans to thoroughly investigate these cells and to apply novel treatments (identified as potential adjunct therapies for emphysema) in the context of severe asthma.

Asthma Foundation of SA Chief Executive David Bedson is pleased that the Foundation can give back to the community and is looking forward to the research results. “Violet’s project has the potential to provide new insights into the development of new and emerging treatments for asthma. The grant has been funded by the generous donations and bequests received by the Foundation, and it’s great to see the positive effect we have not only in the field of asthma, but also on the career of a local young researcher” says Mr Bedson.

In **National Asthma Week**, the Asthma Foundation of SA is urging people with asthma to take their asthma seriously. The theme this year is **It’s about time ...**

It’s about time to see your doctor:

If you

- Wake up coughing, wheezing or breathless
- Struggle to keep up with normal activity
- Use your reliever more than three times a week
- Are unsure about the way your medications can work best for you ...

And if you

- Get breathless or wheezy
- Wake up coughing or wheezing
- Struggle to keep up with your normal activity

It’s about time to ask yourself – could it be asthma?

Contact the **Asthma Foundation of SA** on **1800 645 130** for information to help you live well with asthma and to learn asthma first aid training so you can help someone who is struggling to breathe. You can also register for a FREE Asthma Control Pack at **www.asthmasa.org.au**

A new national checklist developed - Asthma: 10 things to ask and tell your doctor (www.asthmaaustralia.org.au) – can help you work with your doctor so you get a written Asthma Action Plan, you are confident to use your preventer and reliever medication and you know how to monitor your asthma.

The Asthma Australia website www.asthmaaustralia.org.au has new resources for National Asthma Week:

- 10 things to ask and tell your doctor about asthma
- Asthma the basic facts
- Asthma Australia first aid plan
- CHECKLIST: Could it be asthma?
- CHECKLIST: Live well with your asthma

The website also has a message from Lenore Miller about how she lost her son to asthma, and how important it is for us all to take asthma seriously.

Asthma Australia is the recognised national community voice of Australians with asthma and linked conditions and their carers. It comprises the Asthma Foundations from each Australian state and territory working together on national policy, advocacy and programs and promoting research. It is a national, nongovernment, incorporated body with no political affiliations.

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Photos and interviews can be arranged from Monday 30 AUGUST 2010 by contacting Tom or Tarnya.