

Health ANSWERS awards Quick Wins grant to a cellulitis study

Health ANSWERS has awarded a *Quick Wins* grant to the Australian National University (ANU) and its partner Canberra Health Service to launch an expanded trial in the ACT that aims to improve recovery from cellulitis, a common and painful infection that accounts for more than 130,000 emergency department visits in Australia every year, with around 50% of these requiring hospitalisation.

Cellulitis is caused by bacteria that infect the skin and underlying tissues, often leading to chronic swelling, significant discomfort, disability, and predisposing patients to repeated infections, creating a vicious and costly cycle of illness.

The new cellulitis trial funded by Health ANSWERS builds on a successful research program led by Dr Elizabeth Webb from ANU. Her previous research found that, for patients with persistent leg swelling experiencing repeated cellulitis infections, controlling that swelling using compression therapy, substantially reduced their risk of further infections.

“We’re absolutely thrilled that with Health ANSWERS’ support. We now have the opportunity to test if intervening earlier by providing compression therapy during the infection can support faster recovery and reduce common complications, including further infections,” said Dr Webb.

“The study will also assess potential economic benefits for the broader health system, which could realise huge savings for the health sector.”

Health ANSWERS Quick Wins grants are specifically designed to fund the critical gap — often referred to as the valley of death — between early research and real-world applications in clinical settings, according to Health ANSWERS Director Associate Professor Michelle Moscova.

“We designed Quick Wins grants to specifically support projects looking to advance previously successful pilot projects to the next stage of testing. This is because there are very few grants that support these types of projects,” said Associate Professor Michelle Moscova.

“These grants have a triple aim: to advance promising projects to the next stage of testing, build collaborations between academics and clinician-researchers, and improve staff capacity to do research across the region,” she said.

Health ANSWERS partnership brings together partners from three universities, two health districts, two ambulance services, three primary health networks, a government agency, and consumer organisation across a region that extends across the South-Eastern NSW and ACT.

“The partnership was formed to establish collaborations between health practitioners, hospitals, researchers, and the community,” said Chair of Health ANSWERS Board Ms Margaret Bennett.

“A key part of this effort is to improve the research skills of clinicians working in the Southern region, which is why it is important that the research we fund includes clinician-researchers. The on-the-ground expertise of clinicians is critical to ensure research is relevant and solves real clinical problems.”

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