

P R E S S R E L E A S E

The Oticon Foundation New Zealand

Wednesday 6th May 2015

SIGNIFICANT GRANT ALLOWS CONTINUATION OF UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY RESEARCH INTO PREVENTING HEARING LOSS

The Oticon Foundation in New Zealand has today awarded a research grant of \$319,500 to the New Zealand Institute of Language, Brain and Behaviour at the University of Canterbury to investigate the prevention of hearing loss during ear surgery.

“This is a major financial commitment to a substantial research project to monitor hearing and reduce the incidence of hearing loss during otologic surgery – or ear microsurgery,” says Karen Pullar, Secretary to the Trustees, of The Oticon Foundation in New Zealand.

“The Oticon Foundation has reviewed the proposed research headed by Associate Professor Greg O’Beirne (PhD) and Associate Professor Phil Bird (MBChB, FRACS) and believes it is of such significant importance internationally that it is providing the funding for the three year project.”

The outcomes of the research will benefit the large number of people undergoing otologic surgery, around 60 per year in Christchurch alone, with thousands more worldwide.

The funding will be used for audiological research during ear microsurgery and will facilitate a range of studies in this area including:

- Performing intraoperative monitoring during several different types of otologic surgery;
- Determining the sites and mechanisms of hearing loss in these surgeries; and
- Continuing the development of the innovative University of Canterbury Intraoperative Monitoring system.

“This research is all about better outcomes for patients,” says Mr Phil Bird, who is also an ear specialist in Christchurch and Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Otago.

“Occasionally patients have problems with hearing and balance after surgery. This research will allow us to look at these issues and the interventions in a systematic way to get better results for patients.”

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“Ear surgery is very successful at improving hearing and quality of life, but occasionally the surgeries themselves can carry some risk of hearing damage. The project aims to reduce the likelihood of this hearing loss occurring by improving the monitoring of hearing during surgery. If we can provide rapid feedback to the surgeon we have a good chance of reducing damage to the inner ear or auditory nerve during the procedure,” says Associate Professor Greg O’Beirne.

Intraoperative monitoring provides the surgeon with continuous information about the status of the inner ear and auditory nerve while surgery is happening. This provides a means of reducing or eliminating permanent damage to the cochlea or cochlear nerve during surgery by detecting changes in function early enough to allow the surgical team to modify their procedure.

In 2009 the Foundation funded the development of the monitoring system used during surgery. An innovative system was developed over the following 5 years to enable continuous objective measurement of middle-ear, inner-ear, and auditory nerve function, and it uses new stimuli and measurement techniques that help improve the quality (signal-to-noise ratio) of the intraoperative recordings.

“We are very thankful to the Oticon Foundation for supporting this major piece of work,” says Prof O’Beirne. “We will provide regular updates on progress. Results from the study will be published in international peer-reviewed journals, and presented at national and international conferences.”

The Oticon Foundation in New Zealand was established in October 1976. It is a charitable trust of Oticon New Zealand Limited and aims to improve the lives of the hearing impaired in New Zealand through communication and knowledge. It is committed to finding better solutions to hearing loss and strives to increase public awareness and understanding of hearing impairment.

Ends.

For more information please contact

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