



New Horizons

Improved Drug Treatment Aim of Pharmacogenomics Centre

The new Carney Centre for Pharmacogenomics, launched last month at the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences, aims to use genetic knowledge to improve drug treatment of patients with a range of illnesses such as depression, asthma and inflammatory bowel disease.

Every day thousands of doses of medication are given to patients in hospitals and medical centres throughout the country, and side effects or lack of response to the drugs are common occurrences.

Research at the Carney Centre aims to better tailor the choice of drug or dose given for each patient, with improvements in safety and effectiveness of the drugs.

The new Centre was launched by Vice-Chancellor Professor David Skegg, on May 26 at the Chateau on the Park in Christchurch following a major grant by the Jim and Mary Carney Charitable Trust.

"I'm delighted to launch the Carney Centre for Pharmacogenomics,



From left: Professor David Skegg, Mary Carney and Associate Professor Martin Kennedy

made possible by the generosity of the Carney Trust, and which builds on the research strength in pharmacogenomics throughout the university," said Professor Skegg.

"It will benefit all New Zealanders by improving the accurate application of a range of medications for conditions such as depression, inflammatory bowel disease, asthma and heart disease."

The Centre is a project developed by the University of Otago's "Leading Thinkers" advancement initiative. "Leading Thinkers" has

attracted Government funds, under the "Partnerships for Excellence" framework, to match the gift of the Whangarei-based Carney Trust.

"The Christchurch School of Medicine's proposal and presentation just stood out," said Mrs Mary Carney at the launch. "I'm so pleased our first grant can go to health research to eventually improve medical treatment for New Zealanders."

The Director of the Centre is Associate Professor Martin Kennedy, who heads the Gene Structure and Function Laboratory at the School, and is coordinator of the University Area of Research Strength, 'Pharmacogenetics and Pharmacogenomics'.

"This grant will enable us to further our research into genetic influences on the treatment of disease. It will draw together our strengths in basic science and clinical research, involving twelve staff and six PhD students across six departments", he said.