

Media Release

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Monash researcher receives prestigious Commonwealth Health Minister's award

Professor James Whisstock has received the Commonwealth Health Minister's Award for Excellence in Health and Medical Research.

Professor Whisstock was presented with his award from the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support, Dr Mike Kelly on Thursday 5 June, at the Australian Society for Medical Research dinner, one of the highlights of Medical Research week. This prize is granted to an internationally renowned scientist who has completed their PhD within the last 12 years, has an outstanding record of accomplishment in medical research, is an inspiring role model and mentor, and skilled health communicator.

"I'm delighted to receive this award," Professor Whisstock said.

"I have a great team, who work hard and make amazing contributions. So it's an honour for me and my team to be recognised in this way."

Professor Whisstock, from the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, has spent the past nine years studying the structure and function of a family of perforin-like proteins, which kill bacteria, virally infected cells and cancer cells. They also play a role in developmental and neural biology.

Last year, Professor Whisstock's group published the first 3-dimensional structure of a perforin-like protein in the prestigious journal *Science*. Remarkably, the work showed that this disease-fighting molecule is also related to deadly bacterial toxins that cause anthrax, scarlet fever and flesh-eating disorders.

Professor Whisstock's award builds on a distinguished research career at Monash University, with highlights including a 2007 NHMRC Principal Research Fellowship, a 2008 ARC Federation Fellowship and the 2006 Science Minister's Prize for Life Scientist of the Year. Professor Whisstock has published over 110 papers in leading peer-reviewed journals and given over 50 invited seminars at universities and institutes around the world. His work has been profiled in the national and international media.

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Professor James Whisstock is available for interview and photographs are also available.