

UNSW researchers to boost the public health response to COVID-19 in NSW

(SYDNEY, Thursday 26 March 2020) A team of world-class researchers and project staff from UNSW Sydney has been seconded to NSW Health to join the fight against COVID-19.

In this first phase of the partnership, 13 experts from two of the University's premier public health research centres – the [Kirby Institute](#) and the [School of Public Health and Community Medicine](#) – have joined public health teams in Homebush to increase the operational and research capacity of NSW Health.

Professor Rebecca Ivers, Head of the School of Public Health and Community Medicine said that UNSW was eager to provide support to the NSW Government in whatever way possible.

“Our experts in public health surveillance, research design and administration will support the incredible teams already working on COVID-19 at NSW Health. They will largely be working on public health containment and contact tracing, and will bring a wealth of knowledge from UNSW's experience and expertise in responding to infectious disease outbreaks,” said Professor Ivers.

The Kirby Institute's Director, Professor Anthony Kelleher, said that these types of partnerships are essential to Australia's response to COVID-19.

“We must rapidly increase our understanding of COVID-19. Knowledge of this virus, how it moves through communities and what prevents its spread will be the basis of the tools we use to combat it,” said Professor Kelleher.

“The Kirby Institute has a long history of research partnership with NSW Health. Our existing networks, relationships and surveillance systems will help support both the extraordinary day-to-day operations and essential new research on COVID-19.”

Professor Vlado Perkovic, Dean of Medicine at UNSW, said the innovation and adaptiveness that drives research at the university set the faculty in a good position to respond.

“The reason UNSW Medicine exists is to address health challenges like COVID-19. The Kirby Institute laboratories have been upgraded to undertake essential research on COVID-19, clinical trial discussions are taking place across the faculty, and our clinical schools are organising to provide frontline medical support for COVID-19.”

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“These extraordinary times call for extraordinary responses. As our teams mobilise; this is the first of many UNSW Medicine initiatives and partnerships to support the fight against COVID-19.”

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About the Kirby Institute

The [Kirby Institute](#) is a leading global research institute dedicated to the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases. We were established in 1986 in response to the then emerging HIV epidemic. We now contribute to knowledge on a broad range of diseases, including viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections.

Our primary work relates to the coordination of national surveillance programs, population health and epidemiological research, clinical and behavioural research and clinical trials. Our research projects are conducted in partnership with communities most affected by epidemics. Together we implement trials of behavioural and biomedical interventions designed to prevent the spread of infectious diseases in vulnerable populations.

Our work in the laboratory is focused on finding ways to control infections, develop new therapies and ultimately towards the development of preventative vaccines. Outside of the laboratory, we provide critical leadership to decision makers in Australia and internationally on the most effective, efficient and sustainable strategies to address deadly epidemics.

About the School of Public Health and Community Medicine

The [School of Public Health and Community Medicine](#) (SPHCM) is internationally recognised as a leader in Public Health with particular research strengths in Infectious Diseases, Health Services Management, Digital Health, Urban and Environmental Health, Global Health, and Primary Health Care. The School aims to investigate and provide new knowledge to help inform policy, governance, organisation, work and leadership in the health sector through cross disciplinary research with both academia and industry.

