

Under the Microscope

With Professor Graeme Hankey

Stroke expert Prof Graeme Hankey was the big winner at the 2006 Premier's Science Awards held last month.

Prof Hankey, the head of the Royal Perth Hospital stroke unit and a clinical professor at the School of Medicine and Pharmacology at the University of Western Australia, won the Premier's Prize for Achievement in Science.

Prof Hankey said he was honoured to receive the award but he views it as a "team win" because much of his research has been inspired and supported by others.

"I thank the Department of Clinical Services at RPH which has allowed me to couple research with clinical service," he said.

"Also, my colleagues and staff at RPH, particularly research staff, and consultants and junior staff in the Neurology and Radiology departments who have taught me and covered for me while I have pursued research projects.

"I share this award with them, including the late Mercy Sadka, and thank them very much for their loyal and generous support."

Prof Hankey leads a study, VITATOPS (Vitamins to Prevent Stroke), which is being undertaken in 100 medical centres in 20 countries, to compare the effect of B-vitamin supplements with a placebo in preventing a recurrence of stroke.

"The aim of VITATOPS is to determine if lowering homocysteine in the blood by means of folic acid, vitamin B12 and vitamin B6 reduces the risk of subsequent stroke, heart attack and death from vascular causes in stroke patients," he said.

"If so it would be a safe and affordable treatment to add to current therapies.

"It would be applicable worldwide and could also be implemented in countries like India and in Asia and not just affluent, developed countries."

To date about 6500 patients have taken part in the VITATOPS trial but by the end of 2008, when the trial ends, 8000 people would have participated, making it one of the world's largest clinical trials.

Prof Peter Leedman, Director of Research, said the award was a fitting tribute to an outstanding stroke researcher.



“For more than two decades Prof Hankey has devoted his life to finding better ways to diagnose, prevent and treat strokes,” he said.

“Prof Hankey is regarded as one of the foremost international authorities in stroke having published eight books, numerous book chapters and guidelines, and more than 250 articles in peer review journals.

“The hospital warmly congratulates Prof Hankey for his outstanding achievement.”