National annual awards announced for advancing public health

Respected dietician Dr Rosemary Stanton OAM has been awarded the Public Health Association of Australia’s 2019 Sidney Sax Public Health Medal during a ceremony in Adelaide last night.

The award, in honour of the late Dr Sidney Sax, is for providing a notable contribution to the protection and promotion of public health, solving public health problems, advancing community awareness of public health measures and advancing the ideals and practice of equity in the provision of health care.

Dr Stanton said she was delighted and stunned to receive the 2019 Sidney Sax Public Health Medal:

“So many people do so much in the area of public health and previous recipients of this award have been such giants in the field. To be linked with people such as Dr Neal Blewitt, Professors Mike Daube, Simon Chapman and Stephen Leeder, and a particular hero of mine, Nicola Roxon, is indeed an honour.”

Dr Stanton’s honour was one of a number of awards announced tonight as part of the Public Health Association of Australia’s Public Health Conference in Adelaide. PHAA is this year celebrating its 50th year as the country’s preeminent voice on public health.

Immunologist Professor Ian Frazer AC received the 50th Anniversary Public Health Achievement Lifetime award which is bestowed on members who have given exemplary service to the association for over a decade.

Dr Frazer was instrumental (with colleague, virologist and cancer researcher, Jian Zhou) in the development and promotion of the human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine to prevent cervical cancer.

Dr Frazer said he was indeed honoured but couldn’t have imagined where his curiosity in the workings of the immune system from the early 1980s would lead him: “I never really saw myself as a public health researcher or clinician. However, Jian Zhou and I saw that what we were trying to achieve in working to make a vaccine for HPV would have potential impact on public health across the planet.”

He said demonstrating the HPV vaccine’s commercially viability proved as challenging as developing the drug. “I’ve realised that the hard part comes after you have the product,” and added “I’m thrilled that the World Health Organisation has now taken on the challenge of delivering this vaccine globally.”

The Co-Chair of the National Alliance for Action on Alcohol, Ms Jane Martin, has been awarded the PHAA President’s Award, acknowledging her work across tobacco, alcohol and obesity to improve population health. Ms Martin’s award celebrates her contribution and inspiration as a passionate and clear advocate in public health.

Michael Moore immediate past CEO of PHAA received the Association’s Life Membership Award for his contribution to public health the past 25 years including as an ACT Territory Minister for Health. ENDS

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