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Australia starts new projects to deal with drug resistance

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To tackle the threat of drug resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB) and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in the Pacific region



Australia's commitment to support the health and wellbeing of the Pacific Island neighbours remains steadfast, with 4 new research projects totalling more than $8.3 million to tackle the threat of drug resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB) and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in the Pacific region.

DR-TB and AMR are major emerging health threats to Pacific Island countries. Part of the funding is a $4.25 million Australian research project that will specifically address antibiotic-resistant tuberculosis in the Pacific.

This research will be led by Professor Barend Marais of the University of Sydney, and include trialling bold new strategies to reduce and eventually eliminate DR-TB in the Pacific. Professor Marais' research will focus on the DR-TB hotspot of Kiribati.

Every person aged 3 or older with TB disease or infection in the capital Tarawa will be treated to prevent the emergence and spread of DR-TB. Patients will be identified by tuberculin skin testing, chest X-ray and/or sputum testing.

The project team will also provide training and mentoring in 6 Pacific Island countries, to improve DR-TB care and prevention, and model the cost-effectiveness of different elimination strategies.

The research is being funded under the Medical Research Future Fund's Global Health Initiative, which focuses on AMR and DR-TB as threats to global and national health security.

Three other projects selected for funding under the initiative are based at the University of Melbourne, and the Macfarlane Burnet Institute for Medical Research and Public Health in Melbourne.