

# News Release



2 December 2010

## **Inaugural HRC Beaven Medal presented to innovative Canterbury health researcher**

The inaugural Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) **Beaven Medal** for excellence in translational research was presented to Dr Martin Than, a consultant specialist in Emergency Medicine at the Canterbury District Health Board, for research that will provide an innovative and workable change to the medical decision-making process for patients presenting acutely to Emergency Departments with chest pain that may be due to a heart attack.

The Minister of Health, Hon. Tony Ryall, presented Dr Than with the Beaven Medal at a function to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Canterbury Medical Research Foundation in Christchurch on 2 December 2010. Minister Ryall said he was “delighted to present the inaugural Beaven medal to Dr Than in recognition of his innovative research project, which will make a significant contribution towards translational health research.”

The Beaven Medal, named after the late Professor Sir Donald Ward Beaven, KNZM, CBE (1924 – 2009), recognises Sir Don’s long time interest in translating research into clinical practice and will be awarded annually by the HRC.

“The HRC’s new Beaven Medal is a way of ensuring that Sir Don’s incredible life and association with diabetes and translational medical research is remembered,” Mr Ryall said.

“I am confident that Dr Than’s research project will contribute to a primary outcome of improved health service delivery over the short-to-medium term, at local, regional and national levels,” says HRC Chief Executive, Dr Robin Olds.

Level 3, 110 Stanley Street, Auckland PO Box 5541, Wellesley Street, Auckland, New Zealand  
Telephone 64 9 303 5200 Facsimile 64 9 377 9988 Website [www.hrc.govt.nz](http://www.hrc.govt.nz)

In a randomised trial, current care will be compared with a new 'fast-track' pathway. Preliminary research suggests that an accelerated pathway with early blood tests in a targeted low-risk group of presenting patients, can be used to rule out the diagnosis of a heart attack approximately 10 hours earlier than with conventional diagnostic assessment. This would allow earlier progression to the next phase of chest pain investigations, prevent unnecessary hospital admissions and facilitate early discharge home. This outcome will be extremely beneficial for patients, who will be reassured earlier that a heart attack has been ruled out and avoid the inconvenience of hospital admission. It also has the potential to change clinical practice in a cost-effective way, by reducing unnecessary admissions, duplication of staff activities and pressure upon urgent care services.

“Professor Sir Donald Beaven had a prestigious career, but it was his passion for medical education, medical research and diabetes that he will be most remembered for. His passion for learning will continue to be an inspiration for students and teachers across New Zealand and I hope that it will inspire many of our health researchers to follow in Sir Don’s footsteps,” said Mr Robert Stewart, Chair of the HRC Board.

#### **ABOUT PROFESSOR SIR DONALD WARD BEAVEN, KNZM, CBE**

(31 August 1924 – 4 November 2009)

Professor Sir Donald Ward Beaven tragically died while fighting a fire at his bach in Little Akaroa on Banks Peninsula on Wednesday 4 November 2009.

Sir Don was an internationally respected teacher and medical researcher. He was a pioneer in many major developments in diabetes treatment and prevention, and in many initiatives in public health.

Born in Christchurch and educated at Christ’s College, Professor Beaven studied medicine at the University of Otago, and had held medical appointments and fellowships all over the world.

He was a foundation member of Diabetes Christchurch, the first society in New Zealand for people with diabetes. He commenced full-time teaching and research at the Christchurch School of Medicine in 1960, and was appointed Foundation Professor in 1971. The Beaven Lecture Theatre at the School bears his name.

Professor Beaven was made a Commander of the British Empire in 1988 for “services to Medicine and the community”, and a Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the 2005 New Year Honours for “services to persons with diabetes”. He accepted a knighthood in August 2009 after the restoration of the former honours system.

In March 2009, Professor Beaven was commemorated as one of the Canterbury Local Heroes – a set of twelve bronze busts of important local figures – and a bronze bust of him was unveiled outside the Christchurch Arts Centre.

Professor Beaven was also a pioneer of Canterbury’s wine and olive industries. A memorial service for Professor Beaven held in the Christchurch Town Hall on 19 December 2009 was attended by nearly 1000 people.

-ENDS-

Dr Robin Olds

HRC Chief Executive

Tel: 09 303 5204

Mobile: 021 966 324

Email: [rolds@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:rolds@hrc.govt.nz)

OR Kristine Scherp

HRC Manager Communications

Tel: 09 303 5202

Email: [kscherp@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:kscherp@hrc.govt.nz)

Dr Martin Than

Canterbury District Health Board

Tel: 03 364 0270

Mob: 021 450 685

Email: [martin.than@cdhb.govt.nz](mailto:martin.than@cdhb.govt.nz)

**About the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC)**

The HRC is the Crown agency responsible for the management of the Government's investment in public good health research. Ownership of the HRC resides with the Minister of Health, with funding being primarily provided from Vote Research, Science and Technology. A Memorandum of Understanding between the two Ministers sets out this relationship.

Established under the Health Research Council Act 1990, the HRC's statutory functions include:

- advising the Minister and administering funds in relation to national health research policy;
- fostering the recruitment, education, training, and retention of those engaged in health research in New Zealand;
- initiating and supporting health research;
- undertaking consultation to establish priorities in health research;
- promoting and disseminating the results of health research to encourage their contribution to health science, policy and delivery, and
- ensuring the development and application of appropriate assessment standards by committees or subcommittees that assess health research proposals.