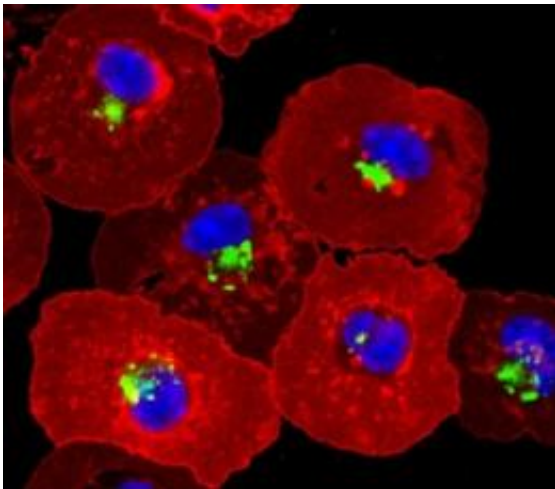


How our lives depend on immunology research

April 20 2012



Microscopic image of dendritic cells which form part of our immune system.
Credit: Dr. Jose Villadangos, WEHI

The life-saving work of researchers who explore our immune system to develop vaccines and fight diseases like HIV will be recognized as part of International Day of Immunology celebrations.

A series of public events in Melbourne next week will highlight the importance of this field of medical research to the public and the advances in immunology that Melbourne researchers continue to make.

The centrepiece of the program is a free lecture - Immunology research: Your life depends on it! which will feature three local leaders in the area

- Monash University's Professor Sharon Lewin and Dr. Glen Westall, and Professor Jim McCluskey from the University of Melbourne. Following the talks, the audience will be able to ask questions.

Professor Lewin is an international authority on HIV. Her talk will cover the immunological discoveries made on the road to the "end of AIDS". She will also talk about treatment successes and ongoing challenges to developing a vaccine and, ultimately, finding a cure.

"The most effective way to eliminate any infectious disease is to have both an effective treatment and a vaccine," Professor Lewin said.

"We have achieved enormous amounts in developing effective treatments for HIV - the challenge now is to find an effective vaccine and a cure. The only way we will get there is by fully understanding every angle of the immunology of HIV."

[Lung transplant](#) specialist Dr. Westall will talk about the process of [organ transplantation](#) and how the immune system needs to be suppressed to prevent the body rejecting the organ. Professor McCluskey will discuss the [genetic control](#) of immunity.

Monash University's Gabriela Khoury helped organise the program of events. She said Melbourne was an important hub for immunology research, continuing Australia's strong history in this field.

"Australian researchers Frank MacFarlane Burnet and Peter Doherty were both awarded Nobel Prizes for their important contributions to understanding how the [immune system](#) is able to fight invading germs, while not attacking the body," Ms Khoury said.

"Today, their work contributes to ongoing discoveries in Melbourne, including research centres named in their honor."

Other International Day of [Immunology](#) activities include the launch of the “Beating the Bugs” primary school competition for Grades 3 to 6, Public Discovery Tours of research centres, and VCE student workshops.

Provided by Monash University

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