

AIBN receives Grand Challenges Explorations grant for groundbreaking research in global health and development

9 May 2012

UQ's Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology (AIBN) announced today that it is a Grand Challenges Explorations winner, an initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

AIBN Professor Anton Middelberg will pursue an innovative global health and development research project, titled *A Transformational Vaccine Platform for the Grand Challenge of Rotavirus*.

Grand Challenges Explorations funds individuals worldwide to explore ideas that can break the mould in how we solve persistent global health and development challenges.

Professor Middelberg's project is one of more than 100 Grand Challenges Explorations grants announced today by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

"Grand Challenges Explorations encourages individuals worldwide to expand the pipeline of ideas where creative, unorthodox thinking is most urgently needed," said Chris Wilson, director of Global Health Discovery and Translational Sciences at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

"We're excited to provide additional funding for select grantees so that they can continue to advance their idea towards global impact."

To receive funding, Professor Middelberg and other Grand Challenges Explorations winners demonstrated in a two-page online application a bold idea in one of five critical global health and development topic areas that included agriculture development, immunisation and nutrition.

Applications for the current open round, Grand Challenges Explorations Round 9, will be accepted until May 15, 2012.

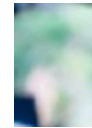
Professor Middelberg's research project aims to deliver a new vaccine against rotavirus using virus-like particles (VLPs), synthetics which mimic the virus.

VLPs have a long history of safe use for other diseases, but are manufactured in cells using complex and costly approaches.

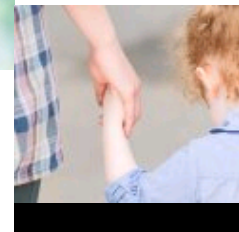
Professor Middelberg aims to make a rotavirus VLP in a reactor instead of cells.

This way, Professor Middelberg hopes to develop a new manufacturing technology for VLPs that can be used throughout the developing world.

"This approach may revolutionise vaccine development in the same way that Henry Ford revolutionised the car industry," he said.

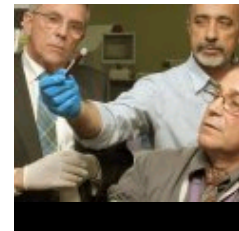


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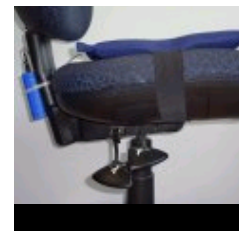


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" Vaccine components are designed and quality-controlled – and only then assembled into a complex product.

"This approach ensures that components which compromise product safety are removed from the assembly line, making manufacture cheaper and more robust."

About Grand Challenges Explorations

Grand Challenges Explorations is a US\$100 million initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Launched in 2008, more than 600 people in 45 countries have received Grand Challenges Explorations grants. The grant program is open to anyone from any discipline and from any organisation. The initiative uses an agile, accelerated grant-making process with short two-page online applications and no preliminary data required. Initial grants of US\$100,000 are awarded twice a year. Successful projects have the opportunity to receive a follow-on grant of up to US\$1 million.

About AIBN

The Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology (AIBN) at The University of Queensland is an integrated multi-disciplinary research institute bringing together the skills of world-class researchers in the areas of bioengineering and nanotechnology. It is home to 20 research groups working at the interface of biological, chemical and physical science to alleviate problems in human health and environmental issues. The focus of AIBN's research efforts is on developing new products, processes and devices for improving human health and quality of life. In this way the institute goes beyond basic research to promote and develop the growth of innovative industries, which will benefit the Queensland and Australian economies. The AIBN acknowledges the financial support of Atlantic Philanthropies, the Queensland State Government and The University of Queensland toward the construction of the AIBN research facility.

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