

# MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

DATE: WEDNESDAY 3 OCTOBER 2007

ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

---



## Researcher aims to crack brain code

Understanding the brain – from the growing foetus in the womb to maintaining an active memory among the ageing population – has earned University of Tasmania researchers a lucrative Federal Government grant.

The National Health and Medical Research Council has allocated almost \$230,000 to the School of Medicine to provide a greater insight into how the brain's electrical circuit develops.

Chief Investigator Dr Lisa Foa said the project was crucial for future pharmacological or gene therapy approaches to mental illness, ageing and neuronal injury.

“Mechanisms that control the exquisite connectivity of the human brain remain one of the great mysteries of neuroscience,” Dr Foa said.

“Understanding how the embryonic brain is wired has direct implications for all aspects of life from the growing foetus in mother's womb, to learning algebra and for maintaining the active memories of our ageing population.”

Experimentation will focus on two key proteins found in the brain, Homer and Shank, that are important for learning and memory. Dr Foa aims to understand how Homer and Shank relate to brain development.

“Homer and Shank are potentially significant protein targets for future genetic or pharmacological therapies in nervous system repair and neuro-developmental diseases,” Dr Foa said.

Dr Foa is the Tasmanian representative for the Australian Neuroscience Society and is active in public events such as Brain Awareness Week.

**Information Released by:**

**The Media Liaison Office, University of Tasmania**

**Phone: 6226 2124 Mobile: 0417 517 291**

**Email: [Media.Office@utas.edu.au](mailto:Media.Office@utas.edu.au)**

**For interviews contact:**

**School of Medicine**

**Dr Lisa Foa**

**Mobile: 0427 220 397**

**Office: 6226 2681**

**Email: [Lisa.Foa@utas.edu.au](mailto:Lisa.Foa@utas.edu.au)**