

**Director**  
Professor Geoffrey A. Donnan  
MD FRCP FRACP

**Associate Directors**  
Professor Brian R. Chambers  
MD FRACP  
Dr. David W. Howells  
BSc Hons, PhD



**NATIONAL  
STROKE  
RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE**

ABN 35 087 172 512

News Release

8 February 2007

---

## **NEW EARLY REHABILITATION RESEARCH FOR STROKE**

A new stroke rehabilitation program (called AVERT) provides early exercise therapy within 24 hours of stroke. Associate Professor Julie Bernhardt presented the results of the new acute trial at the American Stroke Association's International Stroke Conference, 2007. "We have found that exercise therapy (with a focus on mobilization) can be started very early, patients are not too tired and it appears safe", said Dr Julie Bernhardt, physiotherapist and AVERT Program Director. "This is the first research to evaluate the safety and feasibility of a very early rehabilitation program for acute stroke patients. We are now able to confidently move forward to test the benefits of very early rehabilitation."

Very early rehabilitation is provided by nurses and physical therapists. Brooke Parsons, a stroke survivor and consumer representative involved in the trial said "To see staff from different disciplines working together to find better ways to treat stroke is exceptional and exciting."

The next phase of AVERT involves a large multicentre randomised trial with more than 10 hospitals across Australia and over 2000 stroke patients to be recruited over the next four years. The AVERT trial is an initiative of the National Stroke Research Institute, Melbourne, Australia. Initial grant support was provided by the National Heart Foundation, with an Australian National Health and Medical Research Council grant of US\$2.5 million funding the 5 year trial.

---

For media enquires and interviews: Contact Dr Julie Bernhardt AVERT Program Director | email [jbernhardt@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:jbernhardt@unimelb.edu.au) | mobile +61417 583 640

END

**University of Melbourne Affiliated Institute  
NHMRC Accredited Independent Research Institute and Centre of Excellence**

---

Level 1 Neurosciences Building, Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, Austin Health,  
300 Waterdale Road, Heidelberg Heights, Victoria 3081, Australia

**Telephone:** +61 3 9496 2888 **Facsimile:** +61 3 9496 2650 **Email:** [nsri@nsri.org.au](mailto:nsri@nsri.org.au) **Website:** <http://www.nsri.org.au/>