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A field of Tall Poppies

15th October 2010

Outstanding researchers from UNSW have won five of this year's ten NSW Young Tall Poppy Awards, with experimental psychologist Michelle Moulds named as the NSW Young Tall Poppy of the Year.

The awards recognise young scientists who excel at research, leadership and communication. The program aims to inspire young people and the broader community about the possibilities of science and to encourage a culture of innovation alongside the promotion of scientific literacy.



UNSW winners ... Vanessa Venturi, Claire Wakefield, Michael Kasumovic, Frances Kay-Lambkin and Michelle Moulds

With research interests as varied as the mating habits of redback spiders, the psychology of depression, and the immune responses to infectious diseases, the five UNSW scientists were honoured at a gala event held at the Powerhouse Museum.

Two of the winners – Associate Professor Moulds and Dr Michael Kasumovic – are from the Faculty of Science, while UNSW Medicine claimed three winners – Dr Frances Kay-Lambkin, Dr Vanessa Venturi and Dr Claire Wakefield.

A/Professor Moulds' NSW Young Tall Poppy of the Year award recognises her outstanding contribution to the scientific understanding of depression.

Her research program in the [School of Psychology](#) comprises experimental and clinical studies that examine cognitive and memory processes in psychological disorders, in particular the role of rumination in the maintenance of depression-related memory disturbances.

"Rumination is a core cognitive feature of clinically and residually depressed individuals, and has been linked to the duration, severity and maintenance of depressive episodes," A/Professor Moulds says.

Among the other UNSW winners, **Dr Kasumovic**, an ARC Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the [School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences](#), is regarded as a future world leader in evolution and ecology. He is credited with international expertise in creating a

whole new field of research in what is known as 'adaptive developmental plasticity' and his studies into the complex links between demography, competition for mates, and development.

[National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre](#) Senior Research Fellow **Dr Frances Kay-Lambkin**, was recognised for her work developing the SHADE program (Self-Help for Alcohol/other drug use and Depression), an intervention that helps those suffering co-occurring depression and substance use problems.

ARC Future Fellow, **Dr Vanessa Venturi**, from the [Centre for Vascular Research](#), was recognised for her research using computational biology approaches to understand the complexities of the recognition and control of infectious diseases by the immune system.

Dr Claire Wakefield, from the [School of Women's and Children's Health](#), was honoured for her work in the field of 'psycho-oncology', and the investigation of the mental health issues faced by cancer patients and their families.

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