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Research looks at smokers

By John Maslin

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Wanganui-based health researcher Dr Heather Gifford is part of a team that will investigate the smoking habits of Maori nurses and look at ways of getting them to quit.

That is the broad context of a \$549,000 grant a research team has received from the Health Research Council of NZ, part of \$65 million in Government funding handed out by the council.

Dr Gifford, a director of Whakauae Research for Maori Health and Development (WR), works out of an office in Community House in Ridgway St and one of WR's key research areas is smoking cessation.

She said the NZ Nurses Organisation had been a prime mover pushing for the research because it was worried about the numbers within their ranks who were smokers.

"And they're also worried because district health boards were now indicating they would not employ smokers," she said.

Kerri Nuku, chief executive of the NZNO, said the research funding was "fantastic news".

"We've known for some time that Māori nurses' smoking rates are much higher than they should be. Finding out why that is and developing ways to help nurses quit will have wider health benefits than just for the individuals who stop smoking," Ms Nuku said.

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