

ANU to get new centre for medical research

By Daniellé Cronin
Health Reporter

The Australian National University had scored a coup that would stimulate research into important health issues such as funding, workforce shortages and private insurance, a spokesman said yesterday.

Health specialist Bob Wells said the ANU — in partnership with the University of Sydney — had secured a prestigious \$130,000-a-year grant to set up the third Menzies Centre in Australia.

The joint bid beat about 60 other applicants from throughout Australia for the funding from the Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Foundation to promote excellence in health research, education and post graduate scholarship.

Professor of public health and community medicine Stephen Leeder will oversee the work at the University of Sydney and Mr Wells, who has about 20 years' experience in the federal health department, will head the local centre.

Mr Wells said the ANU would focus on health system issues such as the application of the 30 per cent private health insurance rebate; the question of whether nurses should take on some doctors' tasks to ease chronic

workforce shortage; and whether it was better to fund health care on a fee-for-service basis or a per capita basis.

"It's up to governments to decide what the health policy would be," Mr Wells said.

"But we would hope that we can provide more information and more facts and figures that can help them in their policy deliberations and stimulate debate on questions that might be difficult for governments to stimulate debate on because of the political sensitivities."

The long-term aim of the work at the Menzies Centre was to improve services for patients.

The new centre would work with the health group already at ANU, including the John Curtin School of Medical Research, National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Centre for Mental Health Research, Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute and Medical School.

Negotiations were being finalised and the official announcement was expected in November.