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Surgeon wins RPA Medal

This year’s prestigious RPA Foundation Research Medal has been awarded to Professor Michael Solomon for his significant contribution to research, in the field of surgery.

Professor Solomon was presented with his medal, and a cheque for $50,000, at an event held in the Kerry Packer Education Centre today.

The medal was established in 2000 to award and recognise excellence and outstanding achievement in medical research.

Sydney Local Health District’s Director of Research and 2004 medal winner, Professor Warwick Britton, said RPA Medal winners, were high achievers indeed.

“The RPA Foundation Research Medal is always awarded to a person of great vision, passion, and academic excellence,” he said.

“And Professor Solomon is no exception. He is leading the world in research on pelvic exenteration, focussing on innovative surgical techniques and the short and long term clinical and patient reported outcomes.

“Internationally and nationally renowned for his research and clinical care of the most complex cancer cases, Professor Solomon is also the founding Director and Head of the Surgical Outcomes Research Centre at the University of Sydney.”

The centre, known as SOuRCE, was established as a multidisciplinary, academic research unit dedicated to the advancement of evidence-based surgical practice through the conduct of outcomes-orientated surgical research.

Professor Britton said the Pelvic Exenteration Research Program, led by Professor Solomon and SOuRCE, was the first to combine pioneering work addressing the most technically challenging lateral pelvic recurrences and a database of clinical and patient reported outcomes to monitor and evaluate health service impact and patient survival and quality of life.

RPA General Manager Deborah Willcox said Professor Solomon was a true world leader who deserved the hospital’s highest accolade.
“This lateral pelvic exenteration surgical approach is not performed elsewhere nationally or internationally and reflects the development of complex surgical techniques in a highly specialised unit” Ms Willcox said.

“Under Professor Solomon’s leadership, the RPA colorectal team has demonstrated a zero per cent mortality and acceptable morbidity with this approach.

“RPA has the largest single centre experience in sacrectomy for cancer with a series of more than 100 cases and has developed two different approaches. It is the only unit in Australia that performs high sacrectomy.

“I’d like to congratulate Professor Solomon on his impressive body of work and his contribution to ensuring this hospital continues to be a world leader.”

In 2013/14, Professor Solomon and the multidisciplinary surgical team undertook 53 pelvic exenteration surgeries. He has received more than $9 million in peer reviewed research grants from the National Health and Medical Research Centre, Cancer Australia, Cancer Institute NSW.

The recipient of the medal is chosen by a panel of three judges. This year, the judges were: Professor Warwick Britton, Bosch Professor of Medicine and Director of Research, Sydney Local Health District and winner of 2004’s RPA Medal; Professor Steve Chadban, Director of Kidney Transplantation at RPA and winner of 2011’s RPA Medal, and Professor Craig Anderson, Professor of Neurology and winner of 2008’s RPA Medal.

The medal was presented to Professor Solomon by Channel 9 health reporter Kate Creedon. Channel 9 kindly provides the prize money each year.