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Melbourne researcher wins national award for advancing pregnancy care for women with MS

27 November 2026: Monash University's Professor Vilija Jokubaitis has received MS Australia's 2026 MS Research Award for helping women living with multiple sclerosis (MS) make more informed decisions about treatment before, during and after pregnancy.

Professor Jokubaitis's research has influenced clinical guidelines in Australia and internationally. Her findings have helped clinicians understand how the risk of MS relapses, or episodes of new or worsening symptoms, varies with different treatments during pregnancy and after birth.

"Knowing that our research is helping women with MS plan their families with greater confidence, while minimising the risks to their health, is incredibly meaningful," Professor Jokubaitis said.

Professor Jokubaitis is Deputy Head of the Department of Neuroscience at Monash University, where she founded a research group focused on women's health and understanding how MS progresses over time.

She established and co-chairs the international MSBase Pregnancy, Neonatal Outcomes and Women's Health Registry, the world's largest resource of its kind, with more than 29,000 women enrolled. Its first published report analysed data from more than 2,500 pregnancies.

"Working with our incredible study volunteers is a constant source of inspiration. Seeing the reassurance that research can bring, or knowing that the work we're doing today may provide answers to their questions tomorrow, is incredibly motivating," Professor Jokubaitis said.

Professor Jokubaitis has also supported the next generation of MS researchers as a founding executive member of the International Women in MS network, where she established a global mentoring program.

The national MS Research Award recognises outstanding research that improves our understanding of MS and advances efforts to treat, prevent or cure it.

MS Australia CEO Rohan Greenland said the award recognised Professor Jokubaitis's contribution to women's health and MS research.

"Professor Jokubaitis's research has deepened our understanding of pregnancy and MS. That knowledge can help women living with MS look ahead to the family and life they want to build," Mr Greenland said.

Professor Jokubaitis reflected on what receiving the award meant to her.

“Research involves years of dedication, persistence and often long hours, so having my work recognised in such a meaningful way is both humbling and immensely rewarding,” Professor Jokubaitis said.

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