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STAFF/ALAN COOPER
NEWS
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POLLUTION: Exposure to traffic may increase complications during pregnancy.

Prem-birth link to closeness of motorways

Queensland research finds risk with urban living conditions similar to Auckland's

Mothers who live near motorways are more likely to give birth prematurely, research suggests.

The link between the concentration of major road routes around a woman's home and early birth is revealed in a study of 17,000 mothers and their newborn babies in Cairns City, north of Brisbane.

"The most striking result was the reduction in gestation time of 4.4 per cent at around six weeks — roughly a month — for women living within 100m of the motorway," said associate Professor Adrian Barnett, from the Queensland University of Technology's Institute of Health and Environmental Studies.

Barnett's research has previously published a study that found a strong association between increased air pollution and small size at birth.

"Although the increased risks are relatively small, the public health implications are large because every year there are 180,000 babies born in Queensland," he said.

"The term and low-birth weight babies stay in hospital longer after birth, have an increased risk of death and are more likely to develop disabilities."

Professor Barnett said this while an associate state government department was less compared with industrial sites, as people's exposure to chemical toxins

THE STUDY

- 17,000 women from Brisbane studied.
- Worst health effects for women living 200m from motorway.
- Average gestation time 40 weeks, 3 days for women living within 100m of a motorway.
- Smaller babies on average.

in vehicle exhaust was relatively high because of one corridor (the motorway) being so close.

Similar living conditions can be found in Auckland.

The study counted the number of roads within the mother's home up to 500m radius.

"We measured the distance between the home and they took to find the distance to which most of the exposure came from. This distance was not, because this has implications for local government's planning activities or new roads," Professor Barnett said.

The effects of noise pollution were considered to be a possible confounding factor. "Classified living during pregnancy that noise more than that is a risk factor for adverse birth outcomes."



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Alzheimer's breakthrough

LONDON — A new set of genes linked to Alzheimer's has been discovered in a breakthrough that could pave the way to preventing 60,000 people developing the disease, scientists claim.

The new genetic findings have been discovered, enabling the number of people who develop the disease to be halved, and revealing that together they prevent 60 per cent of all cases of the disease. It is believed the work could lead to new treatments and preventions within the next 15 years.

The new genes are linked to the brain and cholesterol in the brain which could mean that drugs could already exist to treat them.

Other research shows new medicines might prevent people linked to the disease.

"If we understand the effect of these 10 genes, we could identify at risk Alzheimer's disease," said Professor Colin Blalock of Colorado State University, who led the international study.

Genetics is thought to account for around 40 per cent of the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. The rest is thought to be due to lifestyle.

The first gene suspected to Alzheimer's was discovered 17 years ago and named by four more than two years ago.

The results, published in the journal *Nature Genetics*, come from examining four separate genetic clusters into Alzheimer's involving nearly 60,000 people worldwide. It involved comparing the genomes of people with Alzheimer's disease to those with Alzheimer's disease.

The results were first compared with other studies in France and the US to identify genes the number of genes.

The new common variants are listed as APOE4, BIN1, EPHA2, C10orf101 and C12orf57.

While earlier genes are linked to the build-up of amyloid "plaques" that are thought to "kill" the brain, the new variants have a altogether different function.

Genes regulate the immune response, which might mean the immune system of cholesterol and lipids in the brain as increases the risk of developing the disease.

The most striking is a new area of research which refers to a process called autophagy — a house-keeping function that cleans up damaged cells.

Researchers say that together they offer a very big clue to reduce the disease.

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North Shore Times 5 April Page 5

NEWS

NORTH SHORE TIMES, APRIL 5, 2011 5

Yanna's keen to be top model

By LISA HONEYBONE

Yanna Hampe could be following in the footsteps of Devonport model Christobelle Greenough-Bryne as winner of New Zealand's Next Top Model.

The 16-year-old Albany Senior High student auditioned for the third series of the TV show at St Lukes Mall on March 27.

Mediaworks TV senior publicist Lily Vicars says more than 600 people auditioned nationwide. Yanna made the shortlist of 23 people who will appear in the first episode.

They will face the judges - Chris Sisarich, Colin Mathura-Jeffrey and the North Shore-raised Sara Tetro - who will select the top 13.

Yanna says she wasn't too sure about auditioning but her friends encouraged her to give it a go.

She says it was exciting to meet the judges after following the first two series.

Yanna says she thinks the judges liked her outgoing and bubbly personality.

"I can say I've done it now," Yanna has no modelling experience but says practice will make perfect.

It will be a good chance to find out if she wants to go down the modelling path, she says.



Strike a pose: Albany resident Yanna Hampe, 16, hopes to be New Zealand's Next Top Model.

The multi-million-dollar Casa Del Mar property in Campbell Bay has housed previous years' contestants along with contestants from the MasterChef TV series.

The location of this year's Top Model house will be revealed in episode one.

Ferries full as fuel price goes higher

By SARAH CODDINGTON

Frustrated ferry users will now have to take on a fare increase along with an increase in fuel prices.

An Auckland Transport report states passenger numbers were up 12.6 percent in February compared to numbers a year ago.

Takapuna-Devonport Board chairman Chris Darby says he has had reports of delayed and crowded ferries in the last few weeks to the North Shore from residents.

A Fullers spokesperson says the main vessel was undergoing repairs and the substitute one on the Devonport service was full because it was smaller.

All Fullers services to and from Devonport and Stanley Bay increased by 6 percent on Wednesday, reviewed the standard adult return fare to \$11.

The company blames a substantial increase on fuel prices.

Since October fuel costs have risen by about 30 percent, the company's chief executive Douglas Hudson says.

Mr Darby says in the

past month more people have turned to public transport as they seek an alternative to using a car. "Motorists are feeling it at the pump where it can be \$170 to fill the tank. The single biggest cost in running ferries is diesel and Fullers are feeling the price at the pump too," Mr Darby says.

Some ferry users have been taking buses to and from the city because of overcrowding, he says. "They just simply want to be at work on time," he says.

To embark the ferry from the Stanley Bay platform people have to almost jump on to the vessel. "It is dangerous and not good for people not confident on their feet," he says.

The company's spokesperson says the platform is not ideal and they have reviewed the service in the past, but local residents want to keep it operating.

Another concern is ferry users are already paying premium fares per kilometre travelled compared to the heavily subsidised rail fares, he says.

Fullers did not want to comment on this.

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Billboards 43 and 44 on Symonds St-May

