

## THE AUSTRALIAN

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# University paid for anti-vaccine student to attend conference

RICK MORTON THE AUSTRALIAN JANUARY 28, 2014 12:00AM

**THE University of Wollongong paid for one of its PhD students with anti-vaccine views to attend an overseas scientific conference organised by a group known for unethical practices and questionable screening of participants.**

Arts student Judy Wilyman received \$3000 to attend the 3rd World Congress on Cancer Science and Therapy in October last year, according to documents released by the university under the NSW Government Information Public Access Act and obtained by The Australian.

The conference was organised by the OMICS Group, which has been called out by academics for using the names of notable researchers on its editorial board without permission and for naming its meetings as close as possible to reputable conferences held by scientific societies.

Ms Wilyman, who has claimed vaccines are linked to autism and the vaccine against the human papillomavirus is not safe, presented a paper she had written that asserted HPV vaccination programs were not cost-effective.

Ms Wilyman did not respond to a request for comment.

Two strains of HPV cause about 70 per cent of cervical cancer and are implicated in oral and anal cancers. HPV vaccines prevent infection from these strains.

Ms Wilyman's supervisor, social sciences professor Brian Martin, lent his support to her bid for funding, writing: "Judy has been making good progress on her thesis."

Professor Martin is a former paid member of the anti-vaccine Australian Vaccination Network and previously supervised a student, Michael Primero, who has links to Andrew Wakefield, who sparked a worldwide scare by linking the measles, mumps and Rubella vaccine to autism.

Mr Primero, as recently as 2011, counted himself as a senior editor of a conspiracy-driven publication called Medical Veritas, which included Dr Wakefield as either an editorial board member or contributor.

Mr Primero also listed himself as a director of Medical Veritas International.

Professor Martin said he was "not aware" of the connection between Mr Primero and Dr Wakefield and defended Ms Wilyman's trip.

"Reputation isn't the only basis to judge a conference," he said. "I am satisfied it was a valuable experience for Judy."

Professor Martin, who studies scientific "controversies", says he is also a member of the pro-vaccine Skeptics Society.

The OMICS Group could not be reached for comment.

The freedom of information application was lodged by medical doctor Thilini Mahaliyana.

"This is a disease that still kills now and I have seen many patients who have been affected by HPV and cervical cancer in my years as a doctor," Dr Mahaliyana said.

"We now have the ability to prevent people from losing their daughters, sisters, mums, friends with what is an incredibly safe, effective and cost-effective vaccine. I believe . . . we need to scrutinise the anti-vaccination movement."

A spokeswoman for the University of Wollongong said: "The university does not interfere with the content of conference presentations and we uphold the principles of academic freedom for staff and students, even when the views expressed are contrary to views of individuals in the university."