Name: Dr Heidi Walkden

Organisation: Australian Government

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Profile:

Dr Heidi Walkden has more than six years’ experience in community pharmacy and neuroscience research. Dr Walkden’s research identified a new path by which bacteria can move from the nasal cavity to the brain and spinal cord, all within 24 hours. She has also shown that an injury to the inside of the nasal cavity can increase the bacterial invasion of the brain via the nose-to-brain pathway.

Alongside her research, Dr Walkden is also an award-winning science communicator. She has won numerous awards for her oral presentations, scientific photos, and poster prizes. Notably, she reached the grand final of the International Asia-Pacific Three Minute Thesis (3MT) Competition in 2017.

In recognition of Dr Walkden’s significant contribution to research and science communication, she was named in the Forbes 30 Under 30 list in the category of Healthcare and Science. Dr Walkden was later named as a Finalist in the 2022 Queensland Young Australian of the Year award.

Dr Walkden was selected for the 2021-22 cohort of the Australian Science Policy Fellowship Program, run by the Office of the Chief Scientist, and is now working within a federal government department. In this role, Dr Walkden uses her expertise to advise and contribute to government research and policy work.