

# NEWSLETTER

## MARCH 2021



## FROM THE ACVA LEADERSHIP

- The ACVA leadership has been actively working across the CVD sector these past two months, starting with the “Building the Future for Cardiovascular Clinical Trials – Towards a National Clinical Trials Enabling Platform” roundtable in collaboration with ANZACT and ASTN, in February. Chaired by Professor John Zalberg OAM, Chair, Australian Clinical Trials Alliance, speakers from Academia, Government and Industry presented and discussed the current clinical trial landscape and ways they are working to make Australia a premier site for [CVD clinical trials](#).
- Australia has significant strengths and capability in relation to medical devices, with a globally recognised research and clinical community engaged in innovation, discovery and trials. In addition, Governments, as a result of COVID-19 are placing increased emphasis and resources on the development of smart industries and associated jobs. Recognising the opportunities for the cardiovascular sector, and the alignment with our Biomedical Engineering Flagship and expertise, the ACVA has commenced a range of Cardiovascular Device Clinical Trial Projects, with joint funding from the MTPConnect Growth Centre Project Fund and consortium members, the Charles Perkins Centre, University of Sydney, and Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute. The projects include:
  - An early phase device capability and infrastructure mapping project, including consultations with the whole sector
  - Industry/Research roundtables and forums to understand needs and promote our existing and planned capabilities
  - A searchable database which is an accessible, searchable portal for use by the cardiovascular sector.

The mapping project comprises consultations with key stakeholders on infrastructure and capabilities relevant to training, pre-clinical and early phase cardiovascular device trials. It is being undertaken by Anthony Murray. Anthony spent 11 years leading regional growth and projects at GlobalData Healthcare, an analytics and consulting firm in Life Sciences, before setting up the Business Development & Marketing division at GreenLight Clinical, a Sydney CRO. Originally from South London in the UK, Anthony is hugely excited to be working on the engagement and mapping phases of ACVA’s collaborative project for clinical testing in CV medtech. The project should be completed by September 2021.

- The month concluded with our first webinar of the year – *Research Impact: Perspectives from Government, Philanthropy and Researchers* to an audience of 80 and some great presentations by Dr Stephanie Blows (NSW OHMR), Dr Derek Van Dyk (Snow Medical Foundation), Bill Stavreski (Heart Foundation) and Prof Julie Redfern (University of Sydney). To view the webinar, please contact [acva@ozheart.org](mailto:acva@ozheart.org) for a link.
- We would like to celebrate the publication by ACVA Biomedical Engineering Flagship Co-Director, Professor James Hudson in *Cell* earlier this month. Professor Hudson and his team

showed that Bromodomain and extraterminal family inhibitors (BETi) are able to reverse the cardiac dysfunction and death associated with a viral response in infected human cardiac organoids and mice. Importantly, BETi also decreased ACE2 expression and reduced SARS-CoV-2 infection of cardiomyocytes, suggesting that they are a promising candidate to prevent COVID-19 mediated cardiac damage. Read the full article [here](#).

- Last but not least, we would also like to celebrate the publication by ACvA President, Professor Gemma Figtree, in *The Lancet* earlier this month. Collaborating with Professor Emil Hagström in a study known as SWEDEHEART, the team looked over 62,000 patients aged between 59 and 78 over a period of 13 years from the Swedish heart registry. The study showed that patients without Standard Modifiable cardiovascular Risk Factors (SMuRFs) have higher mortality than individuals with 'traditional' risk factors, partly due to suboptimal evidence-based medical therapy at discharge, which was particularly evident in women. To read more about the study, see [here](#).

## SPOTLIGHT ON MENTORING PROGRAM

Since its launch in October 2020, our cross-sector mentoring program has gained substantial momentum with 27 pairs matched and mentors from a range of backgrounds, including industry, clinical, government, making this program a truly unique experience. The mentees have also developed their own 'community of network', with regular catchups to get to know each other and share their experiences.

Below are some comments by our mentees of their experience so far into the program:



*Niamh Chapman*

### ***What do you like about the program?***

I like that the ACvA mentoring program is flexible and self-directed. My mentor and I have been able to identify a frequency of meetings that works for us and to focus on areas that are a priority for me right now rather than on pre-set priorities in a schedule. To begin with, I sent my mentor my CV from a recent award application and we began by strategically critiquing my track record. I found this provided an excellent framework to move forward with and has really helped me self-navigate the mentor-mentee relationship and other opportunities that have arisen since.

### ***How often you meet you mentor?***

My mentor and I meet roughly every month for around an hour. Meetings are driven by me which includes organising a time/date/meeting details, a topic to discuss and keeping notes. So far we have decided to focus on reflective work rather than specific tasks, which I have found really useful.

### ***Words of advice you would like to share?***

Advice to other mentees would be to be transparent about where you are currently at and what your career ambitions are. From there, your mentor can guide you on the areas you need to improve so you can both set priorities for what to focus on.

### ***How has your mentor has help you in your future endeavours?***

My mentor has provided much need outside perspective and assurance. Given how competitive research is, it is extremely valuable to have someone experienced critique your track record and provide honest feedback. My mentor has helped me to identify areas where I may need to be more ambitious or assertive and strategies for improving my track record and handle difficult conversations. I have an excellent relationship with my mentor and hope we have an ongoing, supportive relationship beyond the ACvA program as their advice is invaluable.

***What have you learnt from your mentor so far?***

I have found their knowledge of the field, academic progression, grants and expectations extremely helpful. My mentor has helped me identify opportunities for collaboration and how to navigate discussions regarding authorship and leadership in my research group. I lack confidence and was extremely burnt out in 2020, I felt like the challenges or expectations to be competitive for a fellowship were insurmountable and that I would never get there. Perhaps the most valuable thing my mentor has taught me, is that I am on track and in many ways I am excelling. My mentor has helped me identify strategies for coping with this anxiety and build my confidence.



*Rachel Climie*

***What do you like about the program?***

It has been really great learning from someone outside of academia in an industry that I am very interested in. I feel very honoured to have such a high-profile leader in cardiovascular health as a mentor.

***How often you meet you mentor?***

Every 2 months

***Any words of advice you would like to share?***

Having a mentor outside of academia has been really useful to see the “bigger picture” and to receive some critical advice on career development and direction.

***What have you learnt from your mentor so far?***

My mentor has provided me with a lot of insight into the industry she works in, which has been really helpful to understand how I can gain more experience in that industry. My mentor is also a very inspiring woman – she has already taught me a lot without having to say too much!



*Francine Marques*

***What do you like about the program?***

I was matched with someone very senior from a completely different industry. This gave me the ability to gain knowledge about processes and opportunities from research discovery to translation and commercialisation.

***How often you meet you mentor?***

I meet my mentor every 1-2 months via zoom as we live in different states.

***What have you learnt from your mentor so far?***

My mentor has helped me understand when I need to start thinking about commercialisation, what type of data I need for that, and what industry partners are looking for. I have also gained understanding of management structure in other companies and strategies to be more effective with my time and skills to manage my team.



*Dhanya Ravindran*

What I like about it is how easy and flexible the mentoring relationship is, let alone the program. There are no hard and fast rules, or fixed dates for catch-ups, or milestones to meet; the program is progressing at a pace to suit individual's needs and the frequency of meetings is driven by each pair and independent of others in the program. The mentees catch-up sessions are a great opportunity for learning from each other's mentoring experiences. They also help us reflect on our personal growth and career aspirations.



Audrey Adjii

***What do you like about the program?***

I am paired with someone outside my research area that has been successful in the grant application

***How often you meet you mentor?***

Once a month

***Any words of advice you would like to share?***

Be open and honest so your mentor can help you

***What have you learnt from your mentor so far?***

How to create a story around your individual situation as everyone circumstance is different from others.



Khalia Primer

***What do you like about the program?***

I like the relaxed yet structured feel of the program. I enjoy the independence I have in organising meetings, but would feel very comfortable approaching the organisers if I had any issues.

***How often you meet you mentor?***

About once a month.

***Words of advice you would like to share?***

Be prepared to have a couple of initial meetings with your mentor to work out what each of your goals/priorities are. It might take some time, but the initial planning is worth it.

***How has your mentor has help you in your future endeavours?***

My mentor has helped me understand her industry and provided me with feedback on my ideas for projects. She has also facilitated meetings with other key people in the industry and is actively keeping watch for opportunities for me.

***What have you learnt from your mentor so far?***

I have learnt more about the R&D policy field, including how relevant government departments run. I've learnt who to speak to find out certain things regarding policy, and am gaining a more detailed understanding of how policymakers view research and scientists.

**The Mentoring Program is an ongoing event and we encourage anyone interested to sign up using the links below. To register as a mentee, please click [here](#). To register as a mentor, please click [here](#).**

**For further details and enquiries, please contact the Program Manager, A/Prof Anna Calkin [anna.calkin@baker.edu.au](mailto:anna.calkin@baker.edu.au)**

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

---

### Phenomics Australia



Phenomics Australia, formerly the Australian Phenomics Network, APN, provides world-class infrastructure and expertise enabling precision medicine. PA provides a broad panel of disease modelling, high-throughput screening, biobanking services, and technical expertise, for the discovery and a new understanding of the molecular basis of disease to benefit all Australians.

Phenomics Australia enables high-impact healthcare outcomes, through openly-accessible, versatile, and sustainable phenomics infrastructure and expertise to support Australia's research capability. PA offers consolidated skills and expertise from a national alliance of partner institutions in a coordinated and centralised range of services comprising technologies at a scale and quality far beyond the scope of individual research institutions. Please find PA's fact sheet [here](#).

If you or your collaborators need support for your research and are looking for these or other solutions, please contact PA at [contact@australianphenomics.org.au](mailto:contact@australianphenomics.org.au). If Phenomics Australia is unable to offer a solution, its staff will help find an organisation that can. Phenomics Australia is evolving, and its website is coming soon. While PA gets ready, you can have a sneak peek [here](#).

Phenomics Australia is supported by the Australian Government through the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy, ([NCRIS](#)). NCRIS supports Australia's research capability by investing in research infrastructure and making it accessible to researchers across the nation.

### Women in Cardiovascular Research Spotlight

The ACvA Emerging Leaders Committee are proud to announce a brand-new initiative to celebrate our cardiovascular researchers that identify as females through our website and social media platforms. The profiles will be uploaded to the ACvA website for an extended period of time and will be promoted via Twitter and LinkedIn on a regular basis.

We encourage females from all careers stages and disciplines to apply and we will spotlight as many researchers as possible through this initiative. Interested people should complete a survey and upload a brief 2-page CV [here](#).

### Expressions of Interest for Cardiac Amyloidosis Specialist Working Group

The ACvA has recently established a Working Group for Cardiac Amyloidosis, inspired by John, a patient recently diagnosed with cardiac amyloidosis. John has taught us much about what it means to be a patient suffering from a rare cardiovascular disease for which the treatments are both limited and expensive. As John said "Together with the ACvA and my introduction to the Amyloidosis Network of Australia, I feel we are making good progress towards the goal of raising awareness of Amyloidosis and I have also gained an important insight into the work being done to provide new treatments for my condition and what it takes to bring these new treatments to patients."

The Working Group hopes to promote greater awareness and understanding of the disease through identifying gaps and opportunities in research and evidence-based treatment, that can help drive

more focussed efforts and impact. It will engage our Flagships to ensure a whole-of-pipeline approach, and to make a real difference for patients like John.

We are now taking expressions of interest from our membership and networks for anyone who might be interested in joining this Specialist Working Group. Please contact Meng Hsu ([meng.hsu@ozheart.org](mailto:meng.hsu@ozheart.org)) to voice your interest in this Working Group, or any of our other Specialist Working Groups.

## TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

As you may have seen from recent emails, annual membership with the ACvA is now due. To renew your membership, please login to your [Member portal](#) and follow the prompts. If you experience any issues with your renewal process, please contact Meng Hsu ([meng.hsu@ozheart.org](mailto:meng.hsu@ozheart.org)) for assistance.



The ACvA offers our members a range of benefits including access to a range of networks and programs, participation at strategic roundtables, ability to participate in and influence the research environment and culture through our Flagships and Specialist Working Groups. In the interest of increasing our inclusivity and collaboration, please encourage cardiovascular researchers in your networks and your local colleagues to join the ACvA. For a full list of membership benefits, see [here](#).

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND OUR NETWORKS?

---

### Heart Foundation Consumer Engagement in Research Webinar

The Heart Foundation is introducing consumer review panels across its funding portfolio. Not only are applicants asked to consider consumers in their research plans, consumer committees will also review applications concurrently with our existing peer review process. The upcoming webinar will provide an opportunity for you to:

- learn more about our new consumer engagement strategy and the new consumer review process;
- hear from one of our researchers about the impact of involving consumers in their project plan; and
- get your questions answered (you can submit any questions, via the registration form, that you'd like addressed in this webinar).

**When:** 12:30-1:30pm AEDT, Tuesday 30 March 2021

**Where:** This event will be online. Registration is available via [Zoom](#). Please note you will need to sign up if you are not a Heart Foundation Alumni.

**Cost:** Free

## SOLVE-CHD

**SOLVE CHD** [SOLVE-CHD](#), is a 5-year NHMRC Synergy grant and a national multidisciplinary approach, aimed at transforming post-hospital care for people with heart disease in Australia.

Join us at the SOLVE-CHD Cardiac Rehabilitation and Secondary Prevention (CRSP) Network Launch event virtually, to learn more about SOLVE-CHD and its key initiatives (Research Projects, PhD scholarships, Postdoc Research Fellows and more) in the next few years.

This is a great opportunity to connect with current and emerging leaders within the CVD community and explore the potential opportunities to support, learn and collaborate with each other via the SOLVE-CHD CRSP National Network platform. We look forward to having you on the day!

**When:** 1-2pm AEST, Thursday 29th April 2021

**Where:** This event will be online. Registration is available via [Eventbrite](#). A zoom link will be sent to all registered attendees.

**Cost:** Free

## Amyloidosis 2021 Health Care Professional Educational Workshop

The Amyloidosis 2021 Workshop are a biennial event providing interactive education and support forums for both health professionals as well as patients, their families and carers. The Health Professional Amyloidosis Workshop will be conducted virtually and will include interactive Q&A sessions with international experts, Professor Claudio Rapezzi and Professor Morie Gertz.

**When:** 9am - 5pm AEST, Saturday 22 May 2021

**Where:** This event will be online. Program details and registration is available via the [Australian Amyloidosis Network](#) website.

**Cost:** \$100 for specialists, GPs and pharmaceutical industry representatives; \$50 for specialist trainees and fellow nursing and allied health staff, and students

## Medtech Foundations by Cicada Innovations



The Medtech Foundations course is a free online learning course designed to help aspiring medtech founders and professionals learn the fundamentals of bringing innovative technology to market.

Supported by NSW Health, the course is based on some of the teachings from Cicada Innovations' Medical Device Commercialisation Training Program (MDCTP), delivered by expert faculty and features lots of additional case studies, resources, and activities to support learning.

There are six modules that cover lessons including idea validation, commercialisation, and lean start-up theory, with the goal of providing the knowledge, skills, and tools to validate your idea, engage with customers and assess your market opportunity so that you have the best chance of commercialising your medtech solution or building a viable business. Register your interest [here](#).

## ACVA ACTIVITIES

---

### Upcoming webinars from ACvA

On the back of webinars hosted last year, and positive review from our members, the ACvA will be hosting a series of webinars throughout this year and expand the topics covered to target a wider audience.

Due to popular demand, the next webinar in April will be focussed on “Research Impact and consumer engagement across the whole pipeline – basic science and beyond”

Keep an eye out for details!

Other planned webinars include:

- Tips on grant writing success: Converting a near-miss grant to a successful one (June)
- Commercialisation basics (September)
- How to write a commercialisation grant (November)

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

---

### MRFF Clinician Researchers initiative

The Clinician Researchers initiative aims to help the next generation of talented Australian health professionals drive research questions, develop new discoveries and ensure implementation of best practice care for their patients. Applicants must propose a research project that:

- addresses a clearly defined health care priority from local health care and/or practice
- has potential to improve clinical practice or health system effectiveness and therefore patient outcomes
- is embedded within health services (e.g. community-based care, hospitals, general practices); however, it can also be coordinated across networks (e.g. Primary Health Networks, Local Health Networks).

### **Applications CLOSE 12 April 2021**

Find out more: <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/clinician-researchers-initiative>

### Heart Foundation Vanguard Grants

The purpose of the Vanguard Grant is to provide funding to test the feasibility of innovative concepts in clinical, public health and/or health services (including clinical service delivery) or biomedical

research which may lead to larger, more rigorous studies in the future. Both pilot studies and 'stand-alone' projects will be considered. These projects are expected to produce tangible outcomes with the potential to further advance preclinical research technology or improve cardiovascular health.

### **Applications CLOSE 23 April 2021**

Find out more: <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/research/research-funding-available>

#### Heart Foundation Future Leader Fellowships

Future Leader Fellows are emerging leaders; the best and brightest in cardiovascular research. Being awarded a fellowship will allow a researcher to build their research capacity, as they become leaders of research groups. In 2021, the Heart Foundation has expanded eligibility criteria to include researcher up to 15 years post-PhD.

### **Applications CLOSE 30 April 2021**

Find out more: <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/research/research-funding-available>

#### Therapeutic Innovation Australia (TIA) Pipeline Accelerator

The Pipeline Accelerator aims to support and facilitate researcher and SME access to a diverse range of Australian translational medical research capabilities. The Pipeline Accelerator is a voucher-style scheme that provides access to one or more TIA core facilities. Funding, via a fixed-value reimbursement to the service provider, is intended to further reduce the cost of access to a specific capability. Projects are assessed by an external panel on the basis of their scientific quality and potential for development of a therapeutic product.

### **Applications CLOSE 30 April 2021**

Find out more: <https://www.therapeuticinnovation.com.au/accelerator>

#### MRFF Rapid Applied Research Translation

The Rapid Applied Research Translation (RART) initiative supports research projects that encourage academic researchers and health service providers to collaborate to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians by accelerating implementation of research knowledge and outcomes into health care and practice, through improvements to health care delivery, services and systems sustainability. Projects funded by this initiative must:

- use existing knowledge to develop, test and implement new approaches for the translation of research findings into health care and health interventions that have potential for broader applicability;
- address a clearly defined gap in the implementation of best practice health care and health interventions to improve health outcomes; and
- involve all stakeholders relevant to the research and its translation in its conceptualisation, design and implementation, including health care consumers and providers.

### **Applications CLOSE 6 May 2021**

Find out more: <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/rapid-applied-research-translation-initiative>

### Heart Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowships

The Postdoctoral Fellowship aims to identify the best and brightest (recent) PhD graduates and to give them a boost to their research career and enhance their ability to attract and secure future funding.

This Award is aimed at early career researchers and seeks to identify the strongest emerging Australian talent who have just completed or are nearing completion of their postdoctoral studies (PhD). The successful Postdoctoral Fellow will have not just a demonstrated strong track record during their PhD but also be actively engaged in leadership development such as supervision of students demonstrating the potential to become a leader in their research field.

To be eligible, you must have been awarded your PhD no more than 3 years prior to the application closing date.

**Applications CLOSE 14 May 2021**

Find out more: <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/research/research-funding-available>

### Perpetual Ramaciotti Health Investment Grant

These Grants are awarded to individuals in universities, public hospitals or institutes for a contribution towards the undertaking of health or medical research with a potential path to clinical application within five years.

A Health Investment Grant is intended to provide enabling research support for an autonomous early career investigator who is taking, or has recently taken, a substantive position.

**Applications CLOSE 28 May 2021**

Find out more: <https://perpetual.smartygrants.com.au/2021RamaciottiHIG>