

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2022



FROM THE ACvA LEADERSHIP

Welcome to you, our members, new, old and returning. You are the Australian Cardiovascular Alliance. We'd like to offer a special welcome to our new organisational member, **Hearts4Heart** and all the Higher Degree Research Students who've recently joined us through their institutions. It's great to have you all on board!

It's been a busy May and June with workshops, debriefs, an EMCR Summit and the ACvA Strategy Day down in Melbourne.

We barely had time to recover from the buzz and high of our Strategy Day before it was announced that our Executive Director Kerry Doyle had been awarded an **Order of Australia Medal (OAM)** for distinguished service and ongoing support in the area of medical research as well as her work with the Cambodian Children's Fund. As you can imagine, we're very proud and feel lucky to have her heading our team.

We'd also like to Congratulate our President, Professor Gemma Figtree on becoming a member of the Australian Stroke and Research Accelerator (ASHRA) Research Committee. ASHRA is an exciting and unprecedented collaboration bringing together top-tier universities, institutes, investigators, clinicians and leaders to accelerate cutting-edge projects toward clinically and commercially impactful outcomes.

Finally, we'd like to thank Dr Zoe Wainer who has recently stepped down from the ACvA Board. We're grateful for her belief in what ACvA does and for her time and contribution as a Board Member.

ACvA ACTIVITIES

2022 Strategy Day



9 June was our Strategy Day in Melbourne. It was great to meet face to face with so many people from across the country. There's a certain energy that comes from a room full of people and it was exactly what we needed to rearticulate our priorities, catch up on current programs and think about the future.

As well as the ACvA Board and members, we were joined by Mr David Lloyd on his fourth day as CEO at the Heart Foundation. His energy and excitement about potential partnerships and involvement was inspiring and he summed it up by saying "I think we should make cardiovascular health into a national movement".

The recurrent themes throughout the day in presentations and personal reflections were unity and communication. We are better as a united sector and that unity is strengthened the more we understand, engage and communicate with each other.

Many of those who couldn't make it to Melbourne, joined us online.



Emerging Leaders Committee



On Wednesday 8th June we held our first **ACvA Early and Mid-Career Researcher (EMCR) Summit**. We had an overwhelming response to the event with 120+ registrants!

Highlights included Dr Carissa Bonner's talk on her career path and the opportunities that were facilitated through her interactions with the ACvA as well as the launch of the Cardiovascular Champions program.

During the interactive workshops we heard from ECMRs on ways we can get them involved across the ACvA as well as how we can improve the research environment and opportunities for ECMRs through engagement with a variety of stakeholders from policy makers and funding bodies to universities, institutes and EMCR advocates. We finished off the event with a 'speed networking' session. Feedback from day was positive with participants enjoying the interactive nature of the event.

We look forward to holding similar events in the future, bringing our cardiovascular EMCR community together.

We'd like to thank all our speakers, the operations team, Board and senior leadership of the ACvA and the Emerging Leaders Committee for their assistance in facilitating the workshops, as well as Dr Ken Dutton-Regester from Excite Science for facilitating this event.



#ACvACVChamps



CV Champions
A unique leadership program
for cardiovascular EMCR's

As a cohort, learn to:
Think strategically
Expand your network
Engage stakeholders
Create impactful research

Register
your
interest
now



Developing academic entrepreneurs and future leaders

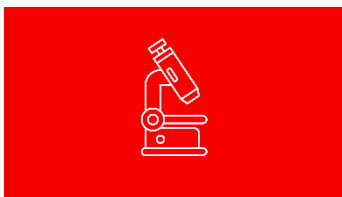
The Cardiovascular Champions program aims to provide a capacity building program to bring the cardiovascular EMCR community together and develop '**academic entrepreneurs**' that are equipped **to lead the cardiovascular research sector** into the future.

The program will include 4 structured workshops on

- strategic thinking
- building collaborations
- stakeholder engagement
- planning for impact

If you are interested in the program and want to find out more provide your details **HERE**.

New Disease Mechanisms Advisory Group



Our newest Flagship, Disease Mechanisms, now has an Advisory Group. In March, we put a call out for EOIs to join the **Disease Mechanisms Flagship Advisory Group** and now we'd like to warmly welcome our newest flagship members:

Susann Beier

Brian Drew

Diane Fatkin

Juliana Hamzah

Mary Kavurma

Julie McMullen

Alex Pinto

Sonia Shah

Nicola Smith

Jordyn Thomas

Antony Vinh

Connie Wong

Morag Young

We're excited about the unique expertise which they bring to the Disease Mechanisms Flagship and look forward to new ideas and better integration for Basic Scientists to the translational pipeline.

Scientific Advisory Committee Applications

The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) is a standing sub-committee of the ACvA under the leadership of and reporting to the ACvA Board. It will ensure that the ACvA Board has a diverse range of advice and expertise that informs the development of scientific strategy and execution.

That is why we're looking for Scientific Advisory Committee members with strong research and leadership track records, who have a commitment to the vision and goals of the ACvA and actively support diversity, equity and inclusion.

The SAC will advise the Board on the development of programs and initiatives to achieve the overall vision of building a vibrant sustainable research ecosystem serving health and the economy.

SAC Terms of reference and further details can be found [HERE](#).

ACvA Clinical Themes Initiative Workshops

Last month we held two workshops focussed on the Stroke and Hypertension clinical themes with the aim of identifying big research questions which address unmet needs in CVD and stroke, that if solved would make a big difference to health outcomes.

The Stroke workshop brought together over 50 participants from across Australia that included researchers, consumers and advocates, clinicians, allied health, government agencies, peak bodies and industry. The workshop was facilitated by Professor Geoffrey Donnan AO and a high-level proposal was agreed and will be further developed in subsequent workshops.

The Hypertension workshop was focussed on engaging with stakeholders from primary care, nursing and pharmacy to explore collaborative models to improve high blood pressure control in Australia which currently lags behind other OECD countries. A key focus of this workshop was to discuss the formation of a national taskforce with remit to improve blood pressure control in Australia to at least 70%.

VentriClinical



VentriClinical is a growing and operationally focused network which connects and empowers businesses, entities, clinicians and professionals to conduct, contribute to or support the successful testing and study of cardiovascular-orientated medical device innovations.

You can find details of the consolidated activities and entities on the [website](#) as well as a triage portal for any

research and development questions, queries or challenges. They're ready to facilitate, advise or connect.

New Manager Dr Jeremy Simpson is firmly in place now and the recently released draft business plan is a current priority. It's being rolled out through VentriClinical members, ACvA aligned partners and key stakeholders to initially outlay and refine services and seek buy-in and commentary. If you'd like to see a copy, please get in touch with [Jeremy](#).

In other initiatives, there's a plan to extend the VentriClinical information offering through an Innovation Directory. There'll be more information on this to come soon.

For any further information or assistance, reach out to jeremy@ventriclinical.org, 0400 410 974 or [Jeremy Simpson](#).

Joint National CV Implementation & Policy Roundtable Debrief



Our inaugural Joint National CV Implementation & Policy Roundtable with the Australian Heart Foundation and the Cardiac

Society of Australia and New Zealand was held on 10 March, 2022 in Canberra. It was a forum for the CV sector to collectively take first steps in setting a national CV Implementation & Policy agenda and action plan. The roundtable focused on the areas of prevention, acute treatment and secondary prevention.

On 13 May, over 70 attendees from across the sector joined us for the online Roundtable Debrief. It was a chance to communicate findings from the Roundtable back to the sector and seek further input and feedback. Discussion from this session will inform the final report.



You can download the Draft Report [HERE](#).

Letters of Support for ACvA Members

Did you know that ACvA offer letters of support to their members for collaborative CVD and stroke grant applications?

If your grant application aligns with our objectives and strategic priorities, we can provide letters of support that can include in-kind support for coordination and communications through this bi-monthly newsletter, Roundtables, Specialist Working Groups and engagement with States and Territories.

This is something that ALL members can access, so email kerry.doyle@ozheart.org to find out more.

Heart Foundation Hobart Visit



Mr David Lloyd, the new Heart Foundation CEO, met with local community and researchers in Tasmania, in May. He also caught up with our own Executive Director, Kerry Doyle, who is currently based in Hobart. It was a chance to continue to develop the partnership between the National Heart Foundation of Australia and the ACvA.

NETWORK AND PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

National Summit for Preventing Sudden Cardiac Arrest and Death



The inaugural National Summit on Preventing Sudden Cardiac Arrest and Death was held in Canberra on 1 June, 2022. Sudden Cardiac death kills more than 2000 people under 50 each year in Australia and has a devastatingly low survival rate of 10%.

This meeting was a unique opportunity to bring together key stakeholders to discuss how to align and join forces to advocate and prevent sudden cardiac death. Attendees included researchers, clinicians, interventionalists, ambulance services, government representatives, bystander response groups, rehabilitation service providers and personally affected advocates.

The group identified actions to reduce the number of sudden cardiac arrests and how to improve survival when an arrest occurs. A major outcome from the meeting was the agreement to form an alliance to gain recognition that sudden cardiac arrest and death are critical public health issues that must be addressed and to drive a national plan to achieve that.



A white paper on the National Summit outcomes will be released. Thanks to the Organising Group of Andre La Gerche, Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute, Chris Semsarian, Centenary Institute, Greg Page, Heart of a Nation, Sue Timbs, EndUCD; Gemma Figtree, ACvA; Jodie Ingles, Garvan Institute; Clara Chow, CSANZ and Garry Jennings, NHF for all their work.

NSW Cardiovascular Research Network



The CVRN Rising Stars Seminar Series is held on the first Monday of each month. The next seminar *Stroke Care-Implementation and Quality* featuring Dr Lauren Christie, St Vincents Hospital and Dr Oyebola Fasugb, ACU is on 4 July, 12.30-1.30pm. Register **HERE** to join online or F2F at Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute

The **2022 CVRN Ministerial Awards for Cardiovascular Research** are now open. They recognise and celebrate outstanding contributions to research in cardiovascular diseases, including diabetes, stroke and renal disease. Applications close 15 August. Please see further details below in Grants and Opportunities.

Save the date for the 2022 CVRN Showcase - Tuesday 25 October: 5 - 9pm. The theme for this year's Showcase is: Sudden Cardiac Death. The program will include presentation of the Ministerial Awards by the NSW Minister of Health and a keynote speaker/s and/or panel of active researchers and testimonial from a person with lived experience.

A new CVRN membership form will be launched in August for NEW & current members. You can renew or join [HERE](#).

La Trobe University



Human trials of a pioneering approach to treating stroke have been accelerated, thanks to a \$6 million donation from [The Beluga Foundation](#) to La Trobe University.

The world-first research, led by La Trobe University with partners the Hudson Institute and Monash Health and [first published in 2018](#), found that injecting human amniotic cells discarded after birth can significantly reduce brain injury and aid recovery after stroke.

Lead researcher at La Trobe University and ACvA Board Director, Professor Chris Sobey, said the Beluga Foundation's significant gift will enable large-scale manufacturing of the amniotic cells, using technology developed by the Hudson Institute, at Q-Gen Cell Therapeutics, a GMP manufacturing facility located within the QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute (QIMRB).

La Trobe's Centre for Cardiovascular Biology and Disease Research (CCBDR) is also inspiring the next generation of medical researchers, recently hosting work experience students from schools in the Melbourne's Northern suburbs. As part of National Science Week, the Centre will also host 'Heart Camp' for Grade 10 students who will spend time in the lab with real-life researchers. Students will learn about the cardiovascular system, as well as gain hands-on laboratory experience working alongside the Centre's team.

The Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute



Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute

The Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute (VCCRI) released three major new papers by researchers in June.

ACvA Board Director [Professor Jamie Vandenberg](#) led a team that has developed a new electrical test that could allow families around the world to discover if they are carrying genetic mutations that cause sudden cardiac arrest. The new test can screen hundreds of gene mutations to pinpoint the exact mutations that are harmful to the heart for those suffering from inherited heart disorders syndromes. The results were published in two back-to-back papers in the *American Journal of Human Genetics*.

Scientists at the VCCRI and St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, have also developed a new MRI technique to replace invasive biopsies for heart transplant survivors. Research led by [Associate Professor Andrew Jabbour](#) published in *Circulation* showed the new virtual biopsy was safe and effective and reduced complications and hospital admissions.

Finally, a team headed by [Professor Boris Martinac](#) led a breakthrough that could herald a new treatment for cardiac hypertrophy. They identified an important new mechanism that causes the heart's muscle to thicken which markedly increases the risk of irregular heart rhythms and heart failure. The new research published in *Nature Cardiovascular Research*

identified the exact molecules in the heart muscle cells responsible and crucially, discovered how they were communicating with one another in a mouse model.

JOIN US Register



ACvA member organisation, the JOIN US register has matched hundreds of Australians with research studies relevant to their health needs. It has now helped **20 research studies** recruit participants.

They're encouraging more Australians to participate in medical research to help save lives today. Encouragement from community leaders and healthcare professionals is crucial to the successful recruitment and retention of participants, so they'd love your help in spreading the word about what they do and how people can get involved.

They'd also like you to get in touch if you're an organisation which has upcoming events where the Join Us team can attend to recruit participants.

You can find them at [Join Us](#) and on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

Cardio-Oncology Webinar Series



The **cardio-oncology webinar series** was established as an initiative of our Cardio-Oncology Working Group with support from Bristol Meyers Squibb, the University of Newcastle, Hunter Medical Research Institute and the International Cardio-Oncology Society.

Cardio-oncology focuses on the management of cardiovascular health in cancer patients, an emerging field with immense potential to improve cancer survivors' quality of life. Cardio-oncology has rapidly grown to a more mature and well-established subspecialty in the last decade. Our knowledge of mechanisms and clinical manifestations of cardiotoxicity has been expanding at a rapid pace.

Working Group Co-Chairs Associate Professor Aaron Sverdlov and Associate Professor Doan Ngo host the series which feature key international leaders in the field discussing the latest developments in this new and rapidly emerging field.

The next webinar on **Wednesday 13 July, 3pm** will focus on the immune checkpoint inhibitor-associated myocarditis as well as nexus between heart failure and cancer.

Register [HERE](#).

As we said earlier, you are the ACvA, so please let us know if you have any cardiovascular research news, events, jobs or training which you'd like to share. Email nina.cullen@ozheart.org



UPCOMING EVENTS & TRAINING



[AI in Healthcare Training Program & Datathon 2022](#) / Online / 21 July – 16 October

[NSW Health Commercialisation Training Program](#) / Sydney / various courses from August - October

[Heart Failure Seoul Conference 2022](#) / Korea / September 15 -17

[MTAA MedTEch22 Annual Conference](#) / Sydney / 6 -7 October

[AusBiotech 2022](#) / Perth / 24 – 28 October

[Medical Device Partnering Program \(MDPP\)](#) / Adelaide / ongoing

GRANTS & OPPORTUNITIES



[STA Policy Committee and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee](#)

Science and Technology Australia / Australia / 3 July 2022

Science & Technology Australia is seeking candidates to join our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee and our Policy Committee. These are permanent committees of the STA Board. Terms are for two years.

[2022 Research Australia Health & Medical Research Awards](#)

Research Australia / Australia / 15 July

Research Australia's Awards are an opportunity to shine a light on those who are working hard within our sector, who are making incredible discoveries and advancements, and who have tirelessly advocated and supported health and medical research.

[MTP Connect REDI Fellowship Program](#)

REDI Fellowships / Varies / 27 July

The REDI Fellowship Program can provide up to \$250,000 per Fellow, per annum, for industry Fellowships giving Australian, international and/or multinational MTP companies the financial support to bring Australian academics, clinicians and MTP professionals in-house for up to twelve months to work on priority medical research projects.

[Australian Technologies Competition 2022](#)

Australian Technologies / Australia / 4 July 2022

This is Australia's national Competition, growth and partnerships program. They're looking to showcase and accelerate homegrown tech-based companies with the greatest global potential. This Competition is open to all Australian-registered businesses with tech-based solutions.

[Menzies Scholarship](#)

Menzies Scholarship & MedTech Actuator / Australia / 15 July

Together, MedTech Actuator and the Menzies Foundation award ten high-potential health, medical and biotechnology researchers with the MedTech Actuator Menzies Scholarships encouraging the next generation of health leaders to build strong foundations in

commercialisation, supporting the scientific community's capacity to bring innovation to market.

Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies Grants

NHMRC / Australia / 27 July (minimum data)

Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies Grants support high-quality clinical trials and cohort studies that address important gaps in knowledge, leading to relevant and implementable findings for the benefit of human health.

2022 NSW CVRN Ministerial Awards for Cardiovascular Research

NSW CVRN / NSW / 15 August

The Ministerial Awards for Cardiovascular Research, recognise and celebrate outstanding contributions to research in cardiovascular diseases, including diabetes, stroke and renal disease. Applications for these awards are by nomination.

- **The Ministerial Award for Cardiovascular Research Excellence** recognises a distinguished career and life-long achievement and contribution to breakthroughs in cardiovascular disease
- **The Ministerial Awards for Rising Stars in Cardiovascular Research** specifically recognise the achievements of **two** early to mid-career researchers, up to 10 years post-PhD

NSW Health Cardiovascular Research Capacity Program - Cardiovascular Collaborative Grants

NSW Health/ NSW / Open July – 30 September

NSW's Cardiovascular Research Capacity Program funds high quality cardiovascular research in NSW in order to drive scientific discoveries, support the development of novel and innovative therapies, and improve health outcomes for patients with cardiovascular disease.

Cardiovascular Collaborative Grants will open in July 2022. This is a new two-year development grant of up to \$1 million over two years. Collaborative grants are targeted at NSW-led collaborations involving multiple institutions and support success with national funding opportunities.

2022 Clinician Researchers: Nurses, Midwives and Allied Health Grant Opportunity

MRFF / Australia / 10 August

The objective of Streams 1 and 2 of this grant opportunity is to provide grants of financial assistance to support medical research projects led by nurses, midwives and allied health professionals that validate and implement new approaches for improving the quality of patient care.

The objective of Stream 3 of this grant opportunity is to provide a grant of financial assistance to support a medical research project that prospectively evaluates projects funded through Streams 1 and 2 to generate knowledge that improves understanding of the factors that promote the adoption, impact and sustainability of evidence-based practice in health care.

MRFF – 2021 BioMedTech Incubator

MRFF / Australia / 25 August

This opportunity looks to fund the most suitable organisation who can identify and select a number of Australian small and medium enterprises (SMEs) undertaking early-stage medical research and medical innovation projects that have commercial potential.

MRFF – Cardiovascular Health Mission – 2022 Cardiovascular Health Grant Opportunity

MRFF / Australia / 7 September

The objective of this grant opportunity is to provide grants of financial assistance to support Australian medical research and medical innovation projects that:

- **Stream 1** (Targeted Call for Research): improve the understanding of cardiovascular disease risk, including biological mechanisms.

- **Stream 2** (Targeted Call for Research): conduct preclinical development and validation of novel molecular targets and novel device approaches for cardiovascular disease and/or stroke.
- **Stream 3** (Accelerator): conduct a large-scale project focused on discovery and testing of new, broadly applicable (multiple disease groups) interventions for cardiovascular disease and/or stroke (e.g. anti-inflammatory targets).

National Critical Research Infrastructure Grant Opportunity

MRFF / Australia / 7 September

The 2022 National Critical Research Infrastructure grant is part of the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) and the National Critical Research Infrastructure Initiative. This 3-stream program will fund organisations to undertake innovative project solutions to complex health problems in areas of unmet need to improve Australian's quality of life and the health system sustainability.

MRFF Clinical Trials Activity Initiative - 2022 International Clinical Trial Collaborations Grant Opportunity

MRFF / Australia / 22 February 2023

Applications to this Grant Opportunity must propose a single clinical trial in Australia in collaboration with international counterparts.