

NEWSLETTER

February 2024



FROM THE ACvA LEADERSHIP

What better way to start the new year than to gather together and celebrate the phenomenal cardiovascular and stroke researchers we have in Australia which is what we did two weeks ago at the ACvA Excellence in Cardiovascular Research Awards in Melbourne. We were hosted at the Victorian Heart Hospital, so would like to thank Professor Steve Nicholls and his team for their assistance and generosity.

Congratulations to all nominees, Finalists and our Winners; Dr Ziyu Wang (Game Changer Award), Professor Andrew Murphy (Mentor Award) and Professor Sandy Middleton and Team (Translation Award). It's such a pleasure to publicly celebrate great research and it was wonderful to hear Assistant Minister for Health & Aged Care Ged Kearney MP acknowledge the contributions and significance of the cardiovascular and stroke research sector. You'll find all the event details in the newsletter below and can watch Minister Kearney MP's speech [HERE](#).

We'd also like to congratulate our CEO Kerry Doyle PSM OAM who was recently appointed to the Franklin Women's inaugural Advisory Board helping to guide the social enterprise's sustainability and impact into the future. Franklin Women is Australia's only professional community dedicated to advancing women in health and medical research. The inaugural Advisory Board consists of 8 members who together bring diverse expertise from within, and outside of, health and medical research bringing a breadth of experience that will be critical to the organisation's transition to a sustainable social enterprise. You can read the complete media release [HERE](#).

It's Heart Valve Disease (HVD) Awareness week from 26th February to 3rd March. An estimated 250,000 Australians are living with this condition without even realising it and when left untreated, it can potentially cause heart failure, strokes and irregular heartbeats. A consumer survey by Hearts4heart found that over a quarter (28%) of the Australian adult population (approximately 5.6 million) have never heard of HVD and its impact and challenges. They are proud to support free heart screening events that will take this at select hospitals in New South Wales and Victoria. You can find more information about locations and how to get involved [HERE](#).

ACvA ACTIVITIES

ACvA Excellence in Cardiovascular Research Awards

Australia's world-class cardiovascular and stroke researchers were honoured on 15th February at our Excellence in Cardiovascular Research Awards. The Awards were introduced by the Honourable Ged Kearney MP, Assistant Minister for Health & Aged Care who acknowledged the quality of Australian cardiovascular and stroke research saying, "Reading through this year's nominations, I was so impressed by the many innovative projects being undertaken."



The Game Changer Award, which recognises innovative breakthroughs and the emerging and established researchers who have made them, was by won [Dr Ziyu Wang](#) from the University of Sydney.

Dr Wang has developed a revolutionary vascular graft for coronary artery disease which regenerates into a new artery with organised elastin. This marks a breakthrough in synthetic graft technology. The non-porous, fibre-reinforced design mimics native arteries. This cost-effective innovation authentically regenerates arterial tissue, reducing the need to take grafts from the patient's own body and setting a new standard in vascular medicine.

The Mentor Award recognises the crucial contribution that guidance, support, and knowledge-sharing play in nurturing the next generation of researchers, fostering a positive culture and constructing a sustainable research sector. This year's Mentor award recipient was [Professor Andrew Murphy](#) of the Baker Heart & Diabetes Institute whose exceptional leadership and guidance consistently go beyond what is expected.

Professor Murphy is a dedicated mentor, actively fostering a supportive environment for early and mid-career researchers. His open-door policy, kindness, and strategic career advice have profoundly impacted mentees' confidence, professional growth, and academic achievements. His mentorship encourages scientific curiosity and independent thinking. Past mentees consider his passion, commitment, and dedication as a cardiovascular scientist and mentor truly inspirational.

The ACVA Translation award recognises the outstanding achievements of researchers who have translated observations from the laboratory or unmet needs seen in the clinic into interventions that have real-life impact for patients. The winner of the 2023 Translation Award was [Professor Sandy Middleton](#) and her Team.

Professor Middleton of the Australian Catholic University identified that stroke patients were not being monitored effectively for fever, hyperglycaemia and swallowing within 72 hours post-stroke in accordance with guidelines, resulting in higher rates of death and disability. Professor Middleton and her team developed nurse-initiated Fever, hyperglycaemia, and Swallowing (FeSS) Protocols to manage these complications which led to increased adherence and remarkable reductions in mortality (20%) and disability (16%). These protocols have now been successfully implemented across all stroke units in NSW, and in 64 hospitals across 17 European countries. These protocols are also being implemented across Australia and New Zealand.

The winners were chosen from a shortlist of 11 Finalists who represent the diversity within the cardiovascular and stroke research sector. You can read about all of the 2023 Finalists [HERE](#).

The Honourable Ged Kearney MP, Assistant Minister for Health & Aged Care, congratulated all researchers, saying, "Your efforts are critical in building a healthier and more resilient Australia."

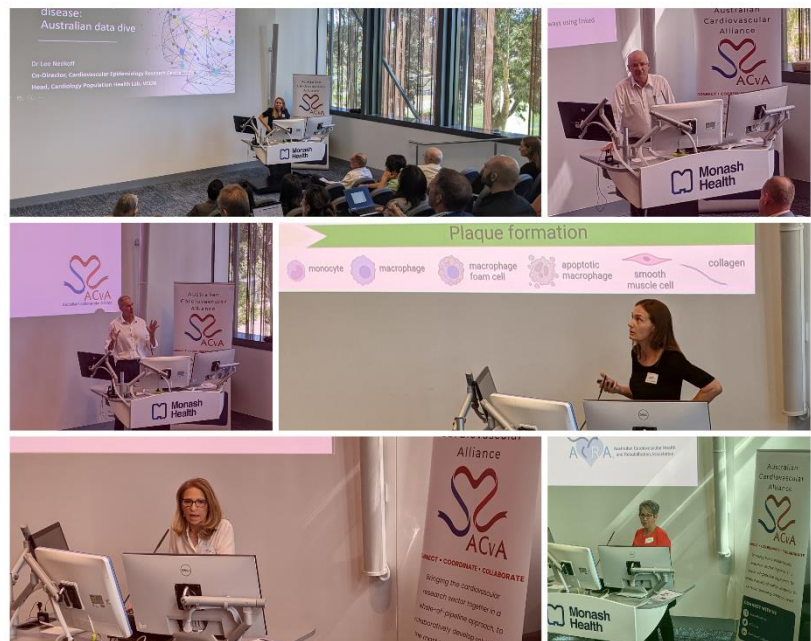
As mentioned above, we're grateful to Professor Steve Nicholls and the staff at the Victorian Heart Hospital for hosting the event as well as our judges Anthony Avvenevole, Saraid Billards, John Crothers, Grant Drummond, John Fraser, Keith McNeil, Rebecca McQualter, Jelena Rnjak Kovacina and Mike Whittle who had the unenviable task of declaring winners amongst such strong applications. We'd also like to thank Christine Rees of Heartbeat Victoria who spoke at the event, sharing her lived experience of heart disease and its effects on her life and family.

Coronary Artery Disease Clinical Theme Workshop

On 15th February, we hosted a National Workshop on Coronary Artery Disease bringing together key thought leaders from across the country to identify ambitious goals and future directions inspiring engagement across the entire research spectrum. This initiative is driven by the recognition that tackling these challenges requires national, collaborative, multidisciplinary approaches that leverage the collective expertise of leading researchers and stakeholders from across the country.

The group discussed the following topics:

- **Understanding the biology of CAD progression: Challenges and opportunities**
Professors Christina Bursill, Jason Kovacic and Nathan Palpant
- **Detecting and treating CAD before a heart attack: Using imaging to move beyond probability**
Professor Gemma Figtree
- **Monitoring CAD at a population level, hospital level, primary health network level**
Associate Professor Lee Nedkoff
- **Can we develop a vaccine for CAD: Identifying new targets for interventions?**
Professor Stephen Nicholls
- **Secondary prevention: Strategies and treatment gaps**
Professors Julie Redfern and Mark Nelson
- **Bringing together key stakeholders**
Professor Judy de Haan (Australian Atherosclerosis Society) and Carmel Bourne



(Australian Cardiovascular Health and Rehabilitation Association)

Some key takeaways from the workshop include:

- The importance of continuing to build this CAD Clinical Theme Platform of exchange and interaction across Australia.
- Learning from other Clinical Themes such as the Hypertension Clinical Theme and how the Hypertension Taskforce model could be adapted for CAD
- The importance to work on and improve CAD-related data and data-dashboards

We'd like to thank the University of Sydney for sponsoring the workshop, as well as the Victorian Heart Hospital for hosting, and a special thanks to Professors Jason Kovacic and Stephen Nicholls for facilitating.

Big Data Flagship EOIs



Last year we put a call out for Expressions of Interest to join our Big Data Flagship Advisory Group. EMCRs in particular were encouraged to apply. The Flagship would like to thank all those who responded and submitted an EOI. They will be in touch with the outcomes in due course. Of course, it is never too late to put your hand up for these opportunities. If you are still interested, you can email our CEO directly at Kerry.doyle@ozheart.org.

SECTOR ACTIVITIES AND UPDATES

The Limbic LIVE



Join ACvA President Jason Kovacic and an expert online panel for ***Transforming cardiovascular outcomes in Australia: time for a strategic national vision*** a discussion of the most pressing clinical challenges in Australian cardiovascular health and the key research priorities needed to solve them. Learn how you can support this innovative approach to bring about measurable and sustainable improvements in cardiovascular outcomes. You'll hear from Professor Jamie Vandenberg, A/Professor Christina Bursill, Professor Peter Meikle and Dr Niamh Chapman. You can find more information and register [HERE](#). **Thursday 29th February, 7.30-8.30pm AEDT**

Hospital Patient Visitor Online Course



Heart Support Australia will be running their FREE Hospital Patient Visitor online training course **Tuesday 12 & Wednesday 13 March at 7pm.**

Hospital Patient Visitors are Heart Support volunteers who have heart disease and have and first-hand experiences of dealing with the physical and mental trauma of a cardiac event or surgery. They provide bedside support to cardiac patients and their carers going through their hospital journey, in order to assist them through a difficult time.

If you or anyone you know is interested in becoming a Heart Support Hospital Patient Carer, please email office@heartnet.org.au.

First Rising Stars seminar of 2024



The NSW CVRN bi-monthly Rising Stars Seminar series are back. The first seminar of the year will be on **14th March 3pm**. *Pulse Perspectives: From lifestyle precursors to blood pressure measurement and medications* is hosted by Dr Isabella Tan and will feature Dr Dean Picone, Dr Niamh Chapman the Chair of the ACvA's Emerging Leaders Committee, Dr Jialing Lin, Dr Mengyun Luo and Sisi Jia.

The live event will take place at The George Institute's new harbourside venue in Barangaroo and is followed by networking & refreshments. You can find more details and register [HERE](#).

South Australia Travel Grants – Opening Soon



South Australian Cardiovascular Research Network students in

The Heart Foundation through the E O Myers Trust Fund provides grants to support medical education, advancing the knowledge and skills of cardiology health professionals or postgraduate

South Australia. In 2024 the following grants are available:

- Three grants up to the value of \$1500 for domestic related activities
- Two grants up to the value of \$3000 to support international activities.

Past recipients have used the grant to attend key conferences in Australia and internationally, support the costs of hosting local conferences, undertake fellowships overseas and support internationally renowned experts to visit South Australia.

If you are a health professional working in a cardiac unit of a South Australian hospital or postgraduate student, this fund could help with your education and travel expenses. Applications will open March/April. Refer to the heart foundations [website](#) for further information.

Early-Mid Career Researcher (EMCR) Representative



Victorian Cardiovascular Research Network

Calling all Victorian cardiovascular EMCRs! The Victorian Cardiovascular Research Network (Vic CVRN) is a cross-institutional, multi-disciplinary network of people engaged with cardiovascular research in Victoria. It aims to facilitate collaboration and promote cardiovascular research for the

benefit of the Victorian population.

The Vic CVRN Steering Committee is seeking an EMCR up to 14 years post-PhD to join the Committee and represent the interests of EMCRs. Expressions of Interest (EOI) are sought from individuals who:

- are a cardiovascular EMCR in Victoria and are primarily based in a Victorian organisation or institution,
- have demonstrated research expertise in a field of cardiovascular biology or disease, including diabetes, stroke, or renal disease,
- wish to positively contribute to the strategic direction of the Vic CVRN and,
- are informed and passionate about challenges facing EMCRs.

Please contact the Vic CVRN Manager at viccvrn@heartfoundation.org.au to request an EOI form or for further information. EOIs will close at **12:00 pm on Monday 25th March, 2024.**

Heart Foundation Catalyst Grants



Heart Foundation

Alongside their traditional research grants, the Heart Foundation have introduced new Catalyst Grants. These grants overcome many of the barriers to traditional research and are open to applicants across all sectors that can outline a project and activity that aims to improve the cardiovascular health of people in Australia.

Catalyst Grant awardees will become long-term partners of the Heart Foundation for whom we will seek funding to 'bring their idea to life'.

You can find more details and dates about the grants [HERE](#).

Genetic Information & Nutrition Interventions for People Living with Heart Disease



Hunter Medical Research Institute

Emerging research has highlighted a relationship between diet and genetics, suggesting that individuals may benefit more from personalised dietary recommendations based on their genetics.

Nutrition and genetic researchers at the University of Newcastle are conducting a brief (5-10min) survey and optional interview for consumers and clinicians around their thoughts, experience and input on using genetic information to tailor nutrition interventions for people living with heart disease.

You can get involved by completing the survey [HERE](#) or sharing the patient survey [HERE](#).
If you have any questions, please email Erin.Clarke@newcastle.edu.au.

Targeted Translation Research Accelerator Interim Report



MTP Connect has just released the report 'Transforming health outcomes for diabetes and cardiovascular disease in Australia' that captures the outcomes to date of the two national Research Centres established and the 22 individual Research Projects funded, which have been collectively awarded \$38.3 million funding across four competitive funding rounds.

The TTRA program was designed to create a framework that nurtures the translation of innovative products and solutions for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and management of diabetes and cardiovascular disease and their complications. You can read the report [HERE](#).

As members, 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

Tag us in your posts so we can help spread the word:

@OzCvA (Twitter)

@Australian Cardiovascular Alliance (LinkedIn)



UPCOMING EVENTS & TRAINING



[Conducting Accelerated Systematic Reviews](#) / online workshops / various sessions starting 28 February

[National Cardiac Registry Annual Status Report Launch](#) / online / 5 March

[Science Meets Parliament](#) / Canberra / 20-21 March 2024

[National Centre for Sex and Gender Equity in Health and Medicine Symposium & Launch](#) / Sydney / 26 & 27 March

[National Stroke Data Linkage Conference](#) / online / 27 March

[AusMedTech Conference](#) / Adelaide / 22-23 May

[World Heart Summit](#) / Geneva, Switzerland / 24-26 May

[ACRA ASM](#) / Sydney / 28-30 July

[CSANZ 2024](#) / Perth / 1-4 August

[Cardiac Prevention & Rehabilitation Global Forum 2024](#) / London / 29 August

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

GRANTS & OPPORTUNITIES



2023 Indigenous Health Research Grant Opportunity

NHMRC / Australia / 6 March 2024

The Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Indigenous Health Research Fund aims to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 11 years from 2018–19 to 2028–29.

National Industry PhD Program

Australian Department of Education / Australia / 15 March

The **National Industry PhD Program** will support PhD candidates to undertake industry-focused research projects and be equipped with the knowledge and skills to better translate university research into commercialisation outcomes.

Professor/Associate Professor, Implementation Science in Healthcare Innovations

Bond University / Gold Coast / 24 March

The Professor/Associate Professor position is a leadership role in Implementation Science and will also be the head of the Healthcare Innovations discipline.

Franklin Women Mentoring Program

Franklin Women / Sydney & Canberra / 28 March

If you are interested in participating in the Franklin Women Mentoring Program in NSW or ACT as a mentee or mentor, enquire within your organisation if they are participating and how to nominate yourself internally. Franklin Women also sponsors a number of subsidised mentee places for **Franklin Women members** who meet the **Eligibility Criteria**, and whose organisation does not participate in our Program.

Medical Devices Fund

NSW Health / NSW / 29 March

Applications are now open for Round 12 of the Medical Devices Fund. In this round up to \$8 million in funding is available and eligible applicants can apply for a minimum of \$500,000 and a maximum of \$5,000,000 (excluding GST) per application.

Partnership Grant

SPHERE Seed Funding Grant Scheme 2024 / Sydney / 26 April

The SPHERE Seed Funding Grant Scheme 2024 (Investigator initiated Partnership Grant) builds on from our Big Ideas model and 2023 Seed Funding that is intended to encourage new large-scale, ambitious programs of work that bring people together across and beyond the SPHERE partnership. Submissions should focus on ideas that foster broad collaboration across Platforms (previously Strategic Platforms), Clinical Themes (previously Clinical Academic Groups) and ideally should include groups or organisations outside SPHERE.

CSIRO Kick-Start Program

CSIRO / Australia / apply at any time

The CSIRO Kick-Start program provides matched funding to Australian start-ups and very small SME's to utilise CSIRO expertise to undertake research activities that will enable your business to:

- research a new idea with commercial potential
- develop a novel or improved product or process
- test a novel product or material