

Spring 2023



**RPH
Research
Foundation®**
RESEARCH FOR BETTER HEALTH

Advancing Health

THE RPH RESEARCH FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

Cover Image: Cell and Tissue Therapies Western Australia

CEO Update



CATE CASSARCHIS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



In our 40th anniversary year, we have been delighted to launch new grant rounds to continue to improve patient outcomes, including our inaugural Nursing and Allied Health Grant Program. Thank you to all our supporters who make these grants possible.

After almost ten years of service as Board Chair of the RPH Research Foundation, Professor Lyn Beazley AO announced her retirement from the Board. Professor Beazley has been a dedicated and passionate Board Chair and is stepping back to ensure a seamless transition.

Throughout her tenure, Professor Beazley has been an exceptional advocate for research and has played a pivotal role in guiding the RPH

Research Foundation through numerous milestones. Her unwavering commitment and strategic vision have propelled the organisation forward, enabling the introduction of new grant streams.

I am delighted to share that Mr John Palermo has assumed the role of Board Chair following Professor Beazley's retirement from the Board. With a distinguished career spanning over 25 years as a Chartered Accountant, Mr Palermo brings extensive expertise in corporate transaction execution, strategic business management, and business structuring.

Mr Palermo has been an integral part of the RPH Research Foundation's leadership team, having previously

served as Deputy Chair and Treasurer. His unwavering commitment to the organisation's mission, combined with his diverse experience, make him an ideal candidate to lead the Foundation into its next chapter.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Lyn Beazley AO for her outstanding contribution as Board Chair. Her influence has left an indelible mark on the Foundation and the researchers we support and for that, we are truly grateful.

Best wishes,


CATE CASSARCHIS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Doreen McCarthy Nursing Research Grant

Advancing Patient Care and resource optimisation

Royal Perth Hospital Nurse Kelly-Ann Hahn has been awarded the Doreen McCarthy Nursing Research Grant 2023.

This grant was created in honour of Professor Doreen McCarthy AM, former Director of Nursing at Royal Perth Hospital, who was a champion for nursing research and instigated many initiatives aimed at promoting nurses as researchers and research into nursing practice. Doreen went on to be the founding Dean of Nursing at The University of Notre Dame, Australia's School of Nursing & Midwifery in Fremantle.

Kelly-Ann Hahn's project is 'An Audit of the clinical indications and collection midstream urine based at

Royal Perth Bentley Group'. Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) are the most common hospital-acquired complications. However, the diagnosis of UTIs poses challenges due to the absence of a universally agreed gold standard for microbiological results or clinical symptoms that can accurately identify an active UTI. Ms Hahn's research project aims to investigate whether healthcare professionals, including doctors and nurses at Royal Perth Hospital, are overly reliant on urine samples.

In June Professor McCarthy awarded Kelly-Ann Hahn her certificate at an afternoon tea celebrating the importance of nursing research to enhance patient care.



Image: Doreen McCarthy (left) presenting the Doreen McCarthy Nursing Research Grant certificate to Kelly-Ann Hahn.

Inaugural Grants enhance patient outcomes



In June 2023, the RPH Research Foundation awarded its inaugural Nursing and Allied Health grants to four deserving recipients. The Foundation provided \$56,343 to grants that focus on addressing critical healthcare areas of falls prevention, Palliative care, Tracheostomy Decannulation, and Cultural Sensitivity for Aboriginal Patients.



Falls Specialist Program and its impact on the health and wellbeing of older adults at Armadale Kalamunda Group Health Service.
Coordinating Principal Investigator:
Ms Alison Reading



Co-design to identify the best method to approach Aboriginal patients who do not wait (DNW) for treatment or discharge against medical advice.
Coordinating Principal Investigator:
A/Professor Vicki Patton

Falls are a leading cause of injury and hospitalisation among older Australians. Falls in older adults have a major community impact and healthcare burden in Western Australia with someone being admitted to hospital with a fall-related injury every 17 minutes in 2020. Armadale Kalamunda Group runs a Falls Specialist Program to help older adults reduce their falls rate. This research project will evaluate the effectiveness of the Falls Specialist Program with the aim to affirm the clinical translation of falls prevention.

Aboriginal patients who do not wait (DNW) or discharge against medical advice (DAMA) are at high risk of adverse outcomes due to insufficient medical treatment resulting in a worsening condition or even death. Patients who leave the hospital against medical advice are at the very least at high risk of readmission which is usually a more complex situation both medically and emotionally. This research will work with the Aboriginal community to co-design an approach and provide a method to approach Aboriginal patients that DNW/DAMA in a culturally sensitive and appropriate way and establish the reason behind their decision.



Palliative Care need and Referral Rates in adult patients in the East Metropolitan Health Service.
Coordinating Principal Investigator:
Dr Alannah Cooper



Breathing Better: Predicting Successful Decannulation in Adult Patients with Tracheostomy
Coordinating Principal Investigator:
Ms Fion Lau

Palliative care plays a crucial role in improving the lives of patients facing serious illnesses. It focuses on providing comprehensive support to patients and their families, addressing their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. One of the key benefits of palliative care is enhancing the quality of life for patients, even in the face of a life-limiting condition. Although we know early access to palliative care leads to improved health outcomes, often patients have delayed referrals or are not referred at all. This project will measure and analyse how many patients within East Metropolitan Health Service could benefit from palliative care yet have not been referred, to better understand unmet palliative care needs and how to improve access to palliative care for all patients.

A tracheostomy is a surgical procedure where a small opening is made in the neck to create an alternate pathway for breathing, typically used when a patient's natural airway is blocked or compromised. Having a tracheostomy is stressful for patients and their families and can impact communication and dietary intake. Physiotherapy plays an important role in determining if a patient is ready for the tracheostomy to be removed, and this physiotherapy-led project will assess if Peak Expiratory Flow Rate (PEFR) helps indicate when to remove the tracheostomy. The study will help increase clinicians' confidence, help increase earlier decannulation and improve patient care.

Stumbling into leadership



**PROFESSOR LYN BEAZLEY AO
FAA, FTSE, CIE (Aust), FACE, MA, PhD. Hon DSc, Hon LLD
WA Australian of the Year 2015
IMMEDIATE PAST BOARD CHAIR OF RPH RESEARCH FOUNDATION**

Professor Lyn Beazley AO is a distinguished neuroscientist and 2015 West Australian of the Year. In May 2023, Professor Beazley shared news of her retirement at RPH Research Foundation's "Celebrating 40 Years of Medical Research" event delivered in partnership with the City of Perth.

At this intimate event, Professor Beazley shared stories from her career and what led her to become an 'accidental leader'.

Few would believe that her illustrious career began with a hint of curiosity. Professor Beazley emphasised the importance of asking questions, recounting her experience as a young schoolgirl asking to peer through Charles Darwin's microscope and the tour guide who unexpectedly granted her request.

As she looked at a carnivorous plant sample, that she now realises was likely from Western Australia, her curiosity was ignited. This moment set her on a career path that she was told would be impossible at 11 years old.

This simple question eventually saw Lyn become the first in her family to attend university. Lyn graduated from Oxford University with a Bachelor of Zoology. While at Oxford Lyn attended an evening lecture by Dr Mike Gaze from Edinburgh University on his work on brain recovery after injury and how to restore sight. This inspired her to complete her PhD at Edinburgh University studying the development of the nervous system in frogs, how the eye connects with the brain and how those broken connections can be regrown.

"This subject became known as neuroscience, but it didn't even have a name back then," Professor Beazley shared.

With a University of Western Australia Research Fellowship Lyn moved across the world and began building an internationally renowned research team in Neuroscience focusing on recovery from brain damage. Being awarded a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Fellowship provided Lyn with a career path in medical research.

However, she insists she isn't a 'natural leader' and that instead her leadership is inspired by being able to see when something needs doing and if nobody else is doing it stepping up and getting it done.

"Somebody said to me, "Oh you're a leader" and I said, "Am I?!" Because I hadn't really realised that."

While in Australia, Professor Beazley's research emphasised the role of appropriate training regimens for recovery from neurotrauma and helped to change clinical practice in the treatment of preterm babies.

She recalls when her daughter went into premature labour at 27 weeks with her second child. As Lyn sat holding her daughter's hand she asked, "Mum do you think they've read all your papers?"

"The research I did actually helped one of my own grandchildren, which is amazing, and it has helped babies all around the world. That is one of my career highlights," Professor Beazley recalls.

Reflecting on her appointment as the first woman to be Chief Scientist of WA, Professor Beazley revealed that



she originally didn't go for the position as she "only ticked 9.4 requirements out of 10".

"Women in particular like to tick every box three times before they apply, however, if it is something you can learn and get help doing, you should take the opportunity," she shared.

Professor Beazley served as Chief Scientist of Western Australia from 2006 to 2013. In this role, she advised the Western Australian Government on science, innovation and technology as well as acting as an ambassador for science locally, nationally, and internationally.

During her years as Chief Scientist Lyn established Dolphin Watch, spearheaded a program supplying

Lyn says that a good leader knows when it is time to leave. "When everything is in good order it is best to step back and let someone else bring their ideas". She applied this to her time as Chief Scientist and is doing it again for RPH Research Foundation.

This humble, passionate, and dedicated form of leadership has been the cornerstone of Professor Beazley's tenure as Board Chair. Her passion for research has helped the Foundation fund critical research that has improved patient outcomes.

"Medical research has a great advantage in that curiosity can be turned into treatments and cures, making a better life," shared Professor Beazley.

"I really fell into medical research, looking at recovery from brain damage through a very unusual route. I hadn't ever imagined that I would be doing medical research, but I'm very glad I did."

"Let me say thank you, thank you, thank you to those who contribute to research. Because your funds, even a small amount can make a huge difference".

Lyn's wealth and breadth of knowledge have been an invaluable asset to the Foundation. Under her leadership, RPH Research Foundation set up the Career Advancement Fellowships which invests in early-stage researchers so they can establish a track record and be competitive in the next stage of their research.

"I'm particularly proud of setting up the early to mid-career Fellowships – it is the hardest stage of your career, and we don't want to lose talented young people in the system".

To further recognise Professor Beazley's dedication and advocacy of early career researchers the Foundation has established the Professor Lyn Beazley AO Emerging Leader Award. The inaugural recipient will be awarded in October at the Foundation's Research Symposium and Awards Day.

Lyn believes some people are leaders from day one, in others leadership is latent - however, the key is to ensure your heart, head and gut are aligned to know if you are going in the right direction.

Although Professor Beazley claims she stumbled into leadership- lead she has. Her contribution to medical research in Western Australia cannot be overstated.



In Memory of Felix Viktor and Verena Vonesch

Changing lives with cancer research



Cancer remains a major health concern in Australia, with over 151,000 Australians diagnosed in 2021. While past research has improved survival rates, there is still a lot of work to be done, with thousands of Western Australian lives lost to cancer each year. Research remains the key to improving patient outcomes and survival rates.

Thanks to the generous gift in Will from the late Verena Vonesch, the RPH Research Foundation is funding groundbreaking cancer research projects in memory of Felix Viktor and Verena Vonesch. One project led by Dr Zlatibor Velickovic aims to help patients with cancer by developing an innovative therapy using Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell technology to boost survival rates.

This research will be conducted at the Cell and Tissue Therapy Western

Australia (CTTWA) facility at Royal Perth Hospital (RPH), a clinical service facility and an advanced therapies manufacturing centre of excellence. The Facility was originally built thanks to an extraordinary gift from Ray Dobney in memory of his brother Bill and has helped thousands of Australian patients. Cell and gene therapies taking place at CTTWA are increasingly used to treat incurable diseases, including cancer.

One of the most promising breakthroughs in cancer treatment is CAR T-cell therapy that offers a way to arm a patient's own immune system to attack cancerous cells. To undertake this therapy, T-cells are collected from the patient's blood, and genetically modified to express CARs that specifically target cancer cells. CAR T-cells are multiplied and evaluated for safety in specialised facilities such as CTTWA using specialised equipment, before being

reintroduced into the patient's body to seek out and destroy cancer cells. This novel treatment has shown an extraordinary response rate (above 80%) in patients with Leukemia.

With the newly acquired equipment, the Vonesch Cancer Cell Therapy project will leverage existing local infrastructure and international collaborations to address this pressing need for WA patients. By focusing on CAR T-cell technology, the project aims to deliver a novel cancer treatment option for eligible patients tailored to individual needs and enhance the therapy's quality and effectiveness with fresh CAR T-cell products.

We extend our gratitude to all who have chosen to leave a lasting legacy of improved health through gifts in their Wills.

Will
WONDERS
NEVER CEASE.
IAC WEEK 4-10 SEPTEMBER

Give a gift to the future

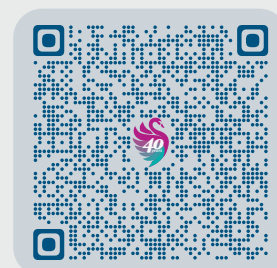
INCLUDE
A CHARITY



A gift in your Will can help create a better world, because any gift left in your Will – no matter how big or small – makes a difference and will leave a lasting impact on the lives of others, long into the future. Having a Will in place is important to protect your loved ones. Once you have ensured they have been provided for, RPH Research Foundation would be grateful if you would consider leaving a gift to help fund Western Australian health and medical research to improve patient

outcomes for generations to come. *Include a Charity* takes place from September 4th to the 10th and helps encourage people to think about the difference they can make by leaving a gift in their Will to charity. To ensure your legacy lives on and positively impacts people for generations to come. As part of *Include a Charity* week, our partner Safewill is offering free Wills for all our supporters from the 4th to the 10th of September 2023. This is to help make it easier for all Australians

to access easy and affordable Wills. To write a Will for free during *Include a Charity* week visit <https://safewill.com/rphresearch> or scan the QR code below.



Running for Research

HBF Run for a Reason



RPH Research Foundation's supporters and staff raised \$3510 through *HBF Run for a Reason* held in May 2023. The highly anticipated *HBF Run for a Reason* made a triumphant return, drawing a staggering number of participants from all walks of life.

The RPH Research Foundation's supporters raised funds for research to advance medical knowledge and improve healthcare outcomes. Taking part in the 4km and 12km walks and runs, they demonstrated their commitment to both physical activity and vital health research.

The event was a testament to the power of community and the determination to make a difference. The RPH Research Foundation extends its heartfelt thanks to all those who joined the run and supported their cause. The funds raised will be instrumental in funding research projects and ultimately improving the lives of individuals affected by various health conditions.

One of the people taking part in this year's run was Travis Battista. Travis challenged himself to run 4kms and raise \$500 for the Foundation. Upon reaching both goals Travis shared his enthusiasm for the event.

"The RPH Research Foundation is dedicated to advancing medical research and finding innovative solutions to improve the lives of individuals facing health challenges. Their relentless pursuit of breakthroughs and commitment to enhancing patient care truly inspired me to go the extra mile—literally!"

"During the *HBF Run for a Reason*, I pushed my limits both physically and mentally, knowing that every step I took was contributing to a greater cause. The incredible support from family, friends, and colleagues kept me motivated throughout the journey. I am profoundly grateful for their generosity and belief in this important cause."

Travis shared that taking part in the *HBF Run for a Reason* was an unforgettable experience with an energetic atmosphere and camaraderie among participants. He thanked everyone who supported him during his challenge and encouraged others to support RPH Research Foundation.

"I encourage all of you to consider supporting the RPH Research Foundation in their pursuit of life-changing discoveries. Whether it's

through participating in events, making a donation, or spreading awareness, every contribution matters and can truly make a difference."

Thank you to everyone who helped raise funds for RPH Research Foundation while taking part in the *HBF Run*. Together we are working towards a healthier future for Western Australian patients.



Image: Travis Battista at HBF Run for a Reason 2023





Give the gift of health



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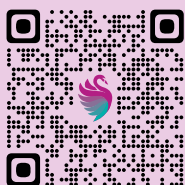


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