THIS IS YOUR EMEMBEDICAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION Remembrance through research TIRRIBUTION Spring Edition 2021

What really happens in a clinical trial

Introducing GMRF's newest doctors

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Launching Go Beyond: helping veterans navigate life after service

> NTM: searching for the cause

Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation





From the CEO Our ongoing committment

I am incredibly proud of the GMRF team, both for their humanity in the face of a very challenging year and their dedication to working to the best of their abilities. They have delivered

on GMRF's commitment to enhancing the health and wellbeing of all Australians through excellence in medical research.

GMRF recently conducted our annual employee engagement survey of all staff and researchers. I could not have been happier to see that despite all the challenges COVID19 has thrown at us since March 2020; 91% of our staff are highly engaged and 9% moderately engaged with the Foundation.

A direct quote from one employee sums up the feelings of many GMRF team members:

"The sense of community that has been fostered by GMRF is very special. Good camaraderie, encouragement and support, inclusive teamwork, strive for excellent standards."

The results of the 2021 survey made me think about the importance of teamwork. By supporting each other we can make great things happen! Our family extends from the lab into the homes of our supporters, without you this important research would not be possible. In this edition of the Tribute you will hear from our expert scientists on what really happens behind the scenes of a clinical trial, learn about the respiratory disease with no known cause and hear from our latest PhD graduates.

In addition to life changing research we are also proud to fund the Cancer Wellness Program at Greenslopes Private Hospital. Read about the experience of one of our lovely craft workshop participants, Judith.

Please enjoy seeing the difference your support is making and learn more about the important work we do.

Miriam Dwver CEO



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hear the latest updates

Foundation

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GMRF welcomes two world-renowned Honorary Professorial Fellows

In exciting news from GMRF, the Veteran Mental Health research department now has access to the expertise of two world-renowned researchers. Professor Nicola Fear and Professor Justin Kenardy join the team as Honorary Professorial Fellows advising the Veteran Mental Health research programs.

On her honorary appointment, Professor Fear said "I am

delighted to accept this honorary position with the Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation. I have been following their work in the field of veterans mental health and wellbeing with interest now for a number of years and I am really excited about working more closely with the team."

Honorary Professorial Fellows help further enhance the quality of research underway at the Foundation. In these positions, both Professor Fear and Professor Kenardy will use their vast expertise to advance veteran mental health research and provide meaningful outcomes for Australian veterans.

Get in touch.

Want to know more about what we do and how your support can make a difference to critical research Contact enquiries.gmrf@ramsayhealth.com.au



in

(GPH) receiving trial treatment. For almost 20 years now

their life

Greg has been living with cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma (a type of cancer that begins in an oil gland in your skin).

Initially, doctors found the cancer in Greg's face. First treatment was a taxing operation on the left side of his face from forehead to throat followed by daily radiation for six weeks. That's 42 consecutive days of radiation. Ten years later, an issue resulting from the extensive radiotherapy left Greg without half his jaw.

A few years ago, another cancerous lump appeared on Greg's face which the doctors swiftly removed, however a year later the lump returned. Again, the doctors removed it. Three months later in December 2019 it reappeared, now five times bigger. Sadly, there was nothing left for the doctors to do. That time between Christmas and New Year in 2019 was one of the darkest moments in Greg's life.

A phone call in the following January turned Greg's life around. Greg was the first participant on this trial, coordinated by Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation at Greenslopes Private Hospital. "I cannot tell you how much of a relief it was when they said it was reducing in size. That was in the first two to three months. It was



"It's just the loveliest thing that anybody can say, that they have their life back. That's how I feel about what they've done." Greg

are smiling underneath the masks!

brilliant!" says Greg.



Clinical Trials Unit helping give people back

Turning to science when no other options exist

Greg is the mate who can fix almost anything. These days he tunes up old lawn mowers when he's not away camping, or out on the boat with his dog, Zoe cruising along the Maroochydore River. But without fault, every two weeks you can find Greg at Greenslopes Private Hospital

> hard to cope, now it doesn't affect what I want to do," says Greg.

> Greg's experience with GMRF has made a significant difference to his trial journey. "They're brilliant at what they do, they know how to keep you up, if you want their help they're a phone call away, they're always able to sort it out. They're

Sadly, not all clinical trials stories are as positive as Greg's. These important medical investigations are critical to

advancing science, but they're also a lifeline for many people with limited options. GMRF Clinical Trials Unit works tirelessly to enhance research and change lives for those with no alternatives.

GMRF is pleased to work closely with Principal Investigator Dr Margaret McGrath on this study, the team at Cyril Gilbert Cancer Centre and the Greenslopes Private Hospital Oncology Pharmacy to make trials like these possible.

Although you can't see in the picture Greg and Clinical Trial Coordinator Rachel

Behind the scenes of a clinical trial

The complex process of making a new medicine

Treatment development can be a complicated and long process. For some, it can take years to move from the bench to the bedside. GMRF scientists are involved in many different parts of the process, from researching how different drugs work in the lab, to coordinating clinical trials with current patients.

The multi-award winning GMRF Clinical Trials Unit understands better than anyone the important work of medical investigations. As well as advancing medical knowledge, clinical trials help patients with limited options by providing access to new and emerging treatments.

Dr Suzanne Elliott, Associate Director of Clinical Trials at GMRF says, "Evidence based medicine on well conducted trials is how new investigational agents become treatment of choice."

Where some new medicines take decades and some take months to develop, Dr Elliott highlights that it all comes down to demand. Using COVID vaccines as an example, Dr Elliott says, "There was an intensity of funding, staffing and regulatory fast-track that

allowed properly conducted trials to be assessed earlier than normal." In this instance, the research community acknowledged the urgent need for these trials to be prioritised for the safety of the general public.

Safety is paramount to developing new medicines. "The community demands that medicines are fully evaluated by the country's regulatory agency (the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration) as safe for the nature of the treatment and disease stage", says Dr Elliott.

There are many steps in the process to make a new medicine available to consumers. Our Clinical Trials experts have shared how the bench to bedside process works.

Bench to Bedside How clinical trials work



Each new treatment or therapy begins in the lab with thorough research. This stage is critical to understanding the potential effective dose and to see if there are any likely side effects.

Phase 1: In a small group of healthy people, Phase 1 clinical trials aim to see if the new treatment is safe. Scientists can use this stage to investigate the dosage and monitor any side effects. Some oncology Phase 1 trials will be done in patients with advanced disease.

Phase 2: The aim of this phase is to see if the treatment is effective, using a small group of people with the condition or disease.

Phase 3: On a larger scale using more people with the disease or condition, Phase 3 trials study how the treatment works in addition or compared to current standard of care.



Meet the **Clinical Trials** Unit

Our GMRF Clinical Trials Unit (CTU) is a team of 18 experienced scientists, nurses and researchers. Currently, the CTU is coordinating close to 30 clinical trials at Greenslopes Private Hospital, partnering with leading pharmaceutical companies and principal investigators.



Pictured some of the CTU team left to right: Corrine, Alice, Suzanne, Rachel, Jordyn, Preethi and Jess

Regulated by Law

Clinical trials are regulated by law. These laws are vital to protecting participants' safety and preserving the integrity of the science. All trials must follow a set of rules that make sure all research is conducted in the safest possible way, results

are meaningful and measured correctly. Trial data is frequently monitored by an external third party to further ensure all reported data is accurate, verifiable and complies with the protocol.

Clinical Trials



Regulation

After all phases are finalised, and the analysed data indicates if a new treatment successfully passes through all three phases, it will potentially be submitted to the regulatory body for approval to use.



Production and quality control

Once the treatment is approved it's then produced and made available.

* Initially, new medicines can be very expensive before they're submitted to the PBS (Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme). Another benefit of participating in clinical trials is early access to potentially new treatments.

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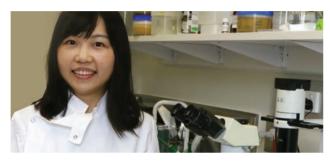
From the bench The latest updates from the scientists at the GMRF Liver Research Unit

Although our day to day lives have changed over the past year, our GMRF labs never stop. The scientists continue on their journeys of medical discovery each day. Here's a snapshot of some projects underway at the Liver Research Unit. Without the support of our generous donors these research projects would not be able to continue making medical discoveries for future generations.

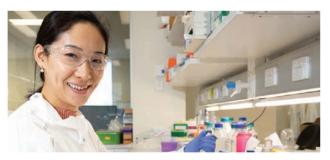
Afolabi is investigating the role of iron in liver injury and understanding how controlling iron with a drug could slow the progression of liver disease. Check out page 8 for an insight into a day in the life of a PhD candidate!



Lucas is developing a new way to predict and detect liver injury in a non-invasive way, using saliva. If findings show saliva accurately detects liver injury, this research could help millions of people in remote areas with limited access to hospitals or medical centres.



Tina is studying the tumour microenvironment and how cancer treatment affects cells around liver tumours. The aim is to develop a new treatment that targets not only the cancer cells but also the area around the cells to stop regrowth. Tina is also understanding how and why some tumour cells leave the main tumour, circulate, and then repopulate the liver. By understanding this process there is a better chance of finding a treatment to stop the travelling cells and understand cancer progression.



Lu is examining a niche sub-population of cells, cancer stem cells, in bile duct cancer to determine how targeting them can lead to better treatment for this deadly condition.

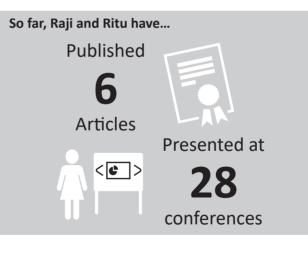
Introducing GMRF's newest doctors The next generation of scientists making strides at GMRF

Over the past four years Raji and Ritu logged thousands of hours in the library, at the lab and pouring over research. Late nights, weekends and holidays were spent working tirelessly for one goal. In March this year their hard work finally paid off when both candidates submitted their PhD projects.



Improving the success rate of liver transplants

Raji's research looked at how to treat a liver before transplant to give it a better success rate. Findings showed that a particular way cells die (necroptosis) play a role during liver transplantation. Understanding what makes the cell die provides a better chance of improving the transplant process or even identifying risky livers before transplant.





Targeting drug resistant cancer cells

Ritu's research investigated how to target cancer stem cells that are resistant to the standard available drug treatment. The project found that a particular biomarker is responsible for this drug resistance and by targeting this biomarker, people with liver cancer might have a better chance of survival.

After submitting her final PhD project in March this year Ritu secured a job in the GMRF Clinical Trials Unit working as a Clinical Trials Assistant to help coordinate and conduct some of the ground breaking clinical trials underway at GMRF.

"I wanted to gain firsthand experience of the translational aspect of lab research into clinical settings. During my PhD candidature, I read about lots of ground-breaking clinical success of novel treatment approaches made possible through clinical trials." Ritu says.

After years of hard work, the researchers are moving into the next phase of their career. Raji has accepted a research position at The University of Queensland and Ritu is now working at the GMRF Clinical Trials Unit.

This research has been made possible by the support of generous donors. You can advance research in Australia by supporting young scientists like Ritu and Raji.

Under the microscope Replicating cancer in the lab

To the normal eye these might look like bubbles, but for researchers these are known as spheres. Spheres are one of the ways scientists can replicate cancer in a lab. These spheres (pictured) show what cells are like in a tumour – they form 3-dimensional clusters of cells. By using spheres scientists can replicate and study the cell-to-cell interactions that would normally occur in the liver. News

A day in the life of a researcher A PhD Candidate's take on the 9-5

Currently in the second year of his PhD project, Afolabi is looking at the role of iron in liver disease. We asked Afolabi to give us a rundown of what his normal day looks like.

> 5:00am – I normally like to wake up early – I'm an early bird. I spend the first couple of hours in the day reading and doing my devotions.

7:00am - I like to come into the lab early when it's quiet so I can concentrate on writing. Sometimes it's writing for publications or writing my thesis.

9:00am - Normally I go over to The University of Queensland labs to conduct part of an experiment. As scientists we sometimes need access to specialist equipment and resources. These experiments include performing drug treatments, collecting samples or accessing equipment to perform protein analysis.

11:30am - I come back to the GMRF lab in time for our lab meetings. But before the lab meeting, I prepare and store samples in the freezer so that they can be used not only for my studies, but future studies as well. During the lab meeting, PhD candidates get together with the supervisors and discuss our results or troubleshoot problems.

12:30pm – I normally have some lunch and go for a small walk before getting back into the afternoon experiments. Experiments can range from determining gene expression, measuring iron in my samples to growing fat cells in culture dishes. At the end of each experiment. I collect all the experimental data and do some preliminary analysis.

4pm – The afternoon is admin time. I'm normally figuring out what supplies I need for my next experiments like chemicals or antibodies, or sometimes I'll prepare for a presentation or send off some draft documents to my supervisor. I also keep detailed notes of the experiments that have been conducted. This record keeping is essential to the research and helps maintain the accuracy and integrity of the science.

5pm – After leaving work for the day, I usually go to the gym or for a run. After dinner, in the late evening, I often watch Netflix at home or chat with friends or my family in Sydney. I like to have an early night so I can get plenty of rest to wake up early the next day!

NTM: Nontuberculous Mycobacterium Researchers unravelling the cause

The Respiratory Research Unit at GMRF, led by internationally renowned Professor Rachel Thomson, is dedicated to making a difference in the lives of those with lung diseases. For decades, there were no answers and limited options for the brave people living with illnesses like NTM lung disease and bronchiectasis, the chronic disease at the core of the **Respiratory Research Unit's work.**

Some of your frequently asked questions

>

>

What is NTM lung disease? Nontuberculous Mycobacteria (NTM) cause chronic lung disease that can make people very ill and damage their lungs. The condition is difficult to diagnose, even for experienced doctors.

Who gets NTM lung disease? Pre-existing conditions make some people more susceptible to NTM lung disease such as lung conditions and genetic illnesses.

There are lots of different bacteria that live in our water and soil. For some people with pre-existing conditions, these bacteria can be dangerous. Our researchers are hard at work to help find a cure.



Felicia is building

a biobank of

specimens taken

from patients with

NTM disease to

fast track research.



03

For people with NTM lung disease, treatment options are limited and simple tasks like walking upstairs can be difficult.

- Where do NTM bacteria come from? The naturally occurring bacteria that cause NTM lung disease are commonly found in dust, soil and water. There are many places in the environment where these bacteria thrive.
- How do people get NTM lung disease? There are almost 200 different types of NTM bacteria that are found in natural environments. It's still unknown exactly what causes NTM disease. GMRF researchers are focusing on finding the answer to this question.

Veterar Health

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GOBEYON AVIGATING LIFE BEYOND SERVICE

Helping veterans navigate life after service

Launching Go Beyond

Easing the adjustment to civilian life post military service is at the heart of Go Beyond, a groundbreaking new online program, now freely available to all ex-serving Australian Defence personnel.

A partnership between RSL Queensland and the GMRF, along with six years of research led to Go Beyond, the evidenceinformed national program to assist veterans with adjusting to civilian life after service.

GMRF Associate Director of Mental Health Research, Dr Madeline Romaniuk said Go Beyond demonstrated research in action, translating this scientific knowledge into real world support.

"Previously, no weight was given to the psychology of transition and the profound adjustment members experience when they separate."

"This highlighted the very real need to examine the learned and lived experience of veterans to provide them and their families with the support needed to navigate the unique challenges of

Are you a veteran?

Take 5 minutes and complete the M-CARM today to receive your tailored needs program. www.gobeyond.org.au

transition," Dr Romaniuk said.

Today, all Australian veterans can access the free Go Beyond program after completing the M-CARM (Military-Civilian Adjustment and Reintegration Measure) survey, an evidence based, online selfadministered questionnaire that quickly and accurately gauges how veterans are adjusting to civilian life.

RSL Queensland General Manager Veteran Affairs and Policy, Robert Skoda said, "Our goal is to support all Australian Defence personnel with research informed services including tools and resources to support a healthy transition to civilian life.

"Go Beyond connects veterans with interactive online educative modules that will explain the factors that are impeding their adjustment experience. The modules incorporate practical exercises and resources to permit the veteran to



move forward in their transition from

Miriam Dwyer, CEO at GMRF says "We

are very proud of this research and its

contribution to the improved transitions

of military personnel and we are grateful

for the support we have received from

the veteran community and our partner

RSL Queensland, as well as Mates4Mates

and Open Arms that assisted with the

pilot program. We look forward to the

positive impact this program will have."

For more information about Go Beyond,

visit gobeyond.org.au

service," Mr Skoda said.



Managing chronic pain with mind and body

Chronic pain is so common among veterans it's almost considered part of life after service. On top of the significant impact on daily functioning and quality of life, chronic pain can take a serious toll on mental health.

Dr Phil Parker, GP ambassador at GMRF says a lot of

beyond the physical aspect. It can impact your mood, and have a detrimental effect on performing work duties and maintaining personal relationships."







Supporting each other on the journey to wellness Why the Cancer Wellness Program is so important



Judith is no stranger to Greenslopes Private Hospital (GPH). As a child she was a frequent visitor to GPH visiting her father, a recovering Changi POW. Years later Judith returned on very different terms.

Judith was admitted to GPH in March 2020 and after months of testing she was getting progressively worse. Soon diagnosed with Diffuse Large B-cell Lymphoma, chemotherapy was the next difficult step in an already challenging journey. Judith withstood ulcers, fatigue, neuropathy in the legs and hands, blood infection and hair loss on her journey to wellness. Thankfully, five months (and six rounds of chemotherapy) later Judith was in remission. However the pain didn't end there.

The chemotherapy, which saved Judith's life, now caused heart failure, landing Judith at GPH again. The silver lining during this tough time was the Cancer Wellness Program.

"Meeting others and the friendships formed, the support that is given so freely, being able to share and that the mood is not 'doom and despair', as well as the support from Cancer Wellness Coordinators," Judith says are the defining factors on her wellness journey.

Cancer doesn't discriminate, it impacts loved ones and carers as well as the person with the diagnosis. Maybe you have been touched by cancer? The Cancer Wellness Program aims to support everyone affected by cancer, not just the person receiving treatment.

GMRF is proud to fund this vital support service. People like Judith rely on the generous support of donors to make the Cancer Wellness Program possible.

For many the diagnosis of cancer is the start of various "firsts" - the first major

I personally know that my diagnosis of Diffuse Large B-cell Lymphoma in June 2020 was the start of many "firsts" or me. I am lucky as I had a very supportive network of family and friends who rallied around to give me moral and practical support.

Numerous patients are not as fortunate, and this is where the GIPH Cancer Wellness Program is so important. The attendees come from various demographics, but cancer is a leveller. From only having one bout of cancer and chemotherapy some have been diagnosed with maybe a third occurrence of cancer and are facing another bout of chemotherapy. Some are in remission and some have been told that their cancer is terminal.

When you attend a session with these individuals (because that is what we still are) which is led by the Coordinator (currently Ranee, previously Ursula) you are made welcome. The feeling of self-worth returns, the humour, companionship, networking, compassion and the sharing of coping strategies abound. We all have different skills and physical limitations and participate at our own level.

To know that the facility is there when you need it is an important step on the wellness journey. I cannot even say "recovery" here as some of us know that there is no recovery, only a life made easier. The message is there You are not alone.

COVID-19 changed the way that this service was able to be delivered in 2020. The craft group and social gatherings were cancelled. I personally, like many others, was unable to use my computer - either by forgetting what to do, too sick to communicate, or even by sleeping through the zoom meeting times. I am so glad that I attended a craft morning as soon as I was able.

The Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation funds this all-important service and it is the fabulous donors who enable this to happen.

jude

Mrs Judith Perryn OAM

Craft workshops creating a symbol of transformation and hope

Butterflies are a symbol of change, of hope and of rebirth. Lately the Cancer Wellness Program has been making beautiful origami butterflies. For people living with cancer, a simple task like folding paper can be both challenging and rewarding. Different treatments affect people differently and while some may not be able to tuck the edges of the butterflies in, others can. Craft workshops like these give people on their cancer journey, not

only a creative outlet and mindfulness exercise, but also a sense of friendship and achievement.

The Cancer Wellness Program is run in partnership with







illness, the first time in hospital, the first time on drugs that could cause side-affects worse than the illness, the first time feeling helpless and not in control.

> Donate today to support people and their loved ones affected by cancer.





Bringing back the Anzac spirit

The Anzac spirit was alive and well this year at the Greenslopes Private Hospital Dawn Service. Hospital staff, members of the community and special guests honoured the memory of those who have served. After the service, GMRF upheld the important tradition of volunteering at the post ceremony gun-fire breakfast. For many, this opportunity to gather and remember is a highlight of the year.



Making a difference: Meet Julie



Julie joined the GMRF team in April but has been part of the GMRF family for a lot longer. Through her work as the Ethics Committee Secretary at Greenslopes Private Hospital Julie worked closely with our researchers to ensure research being conducted here complied with all ethical requirements.

"It's so very rewarding to work for an organisation that has made a difference and continues to make a difference to the lives of many. The GMRF staff are highly motivated and show care and compassion to research participants and each other. I am very proud to be part of the GMRF team."

Now the GMRF Donor Relations Officer, Julie is passionate about helping GMRF continue to create a brighter future for generations to come. If you're interested in helping future generations through medical research, please get in touch today!

"I really enjoy hearing our donors' stories and their motivation for giving. Many, like myself, have reflected on their lives and are thinking of how they too can make a difference through their relationship with GMRF."

Contact Julie today and find out how you can support GMRF. Email enquiries.gmrf@ramsayhealth.com.au

Why I donate

Monica's dedication to giving back



Giving is in Monica's DNA. Since childhood helping others has been at the heart of everything Monica does. After sadly losing her husband to cancer over 20 years ago, Monica now commits her time to helping advance life-changing research. Whether volunteering at Greenslopes Private Hospital (GPH), participating in the GPH Ethics Committee or taking home residents out for the day, Monica is dedicated to giving back.

"In supporting medical research I felt that I could contribute to saving the lives of others."

It all started when Monica was volunteering at GPH almost 10 years ago. Hospital volunteers often help at GMRF, whether mailing letters or taking calls. After witnessing Monica in action on the phone, she was quickly asked to help fundraise for the biggest event in GMRF history, the Centenary Ball in April 2015. For eight long months Monica travelled South East Queensland collecting prize donations. Monica says, "It was a tough gig but I was passionate about the cause." Whether recruiting new donors or securing prizes for events, Monica never tires of devoting her time and efforts to the Foundation and we are forever grateful for her support.

"I would say to anyone - we can all be a philanthropist in our own way. Whether you can donate \$5, \$50, \$5000 etc, every donation helps. We can all make a difference, just do it."

Donor
News

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Creating a brighter future for our veterans and the Australian community

> PICTURED Professor Rachel Thomson RESPIRATORY RESEARCH UNIT HEAD





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