

SSMRF

ST GEORGE & SUTHERLAND
MEDICAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION



Newsletter

DECEMBER 2018

LOOKING BACK OVER THE YEAR

The St George & Sutherland Medical Research Foundation has experienced its most successful year to date and our achievements are many. 2018 will be known as the year of the MRC – the Microbiome Research Centre – our most ambitious venture to grow and foster medical research at St George and Sutherland Hospitals.

In 2017 SSMRF received an initial grant from the Federal Government of \$4 million. These funds have been used for capital works, equipment, the appointment of several key research personnel and five MRC Establishment Grants.

This year SSMRF received \$1.5 million from NSW Health and the University of NSW also made a very significant financial contribution to the MRC capital works.

The refurbishment of the laboratories for the Microbiome Research Centre (MRC) is nearing completion and we look forward to the formal opening in February 2019. This first class facility will enable our growing group of MRC researchers to undertake exciting research projects tackling Australia's National Health Priority Areas (NHPA).

We also welcomed the (then) treasurer The Hon Scott Morrison and The Hon David Coleman for a visit in May and for a second visit to SSMRF as PM in October.

In June SSMRF received an additional \$2 million from the Federal Government to establish a dedicated Bioinformatics Unit within the MRC.

This will impact significantly on our ability to analyse the vast amounts of complex data and return meaningful research outcomes.

SSMRF received its largest single private donation in August from Sir Owen Glenn to support a world class program in liver cancer research.

In August SSMRF hosted its annual charity Golf Day at The Australian and in September our most successful Beachside DASH. These two events and the support from our sponsors, donors, doctors, business leaders and the community will enable SSMRF to provide new Seed (Development) Grants to our "next generation researchers" in 2019.

My sincere thanks to the SSMRF Board and team and to everyone who has contributed to our success this year.

Jacquie Stratford, CEO
St George & Sutherland Medical Research
Foundation



RESEARCH UPDATES

MICROBIOME RESEARCH CENTRE

The Microbiome Research Centre (MRC) continues its drive to tackle the health priorities of the Australian Government. It uses the National Health Priority Areas (NHPA) as the template for expanding the research collaborations and infrastructure, drawing together the best available talent and expertise locally, nationally and internationally.

“Clearly the translational impact of this research will take several years to be fully realised but the agenda is very clear: to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians”. Professor El-Omar, Director MRC

Over the past year, the MRC has expanded its collaborative research agenda to include over 60 projects that cut across these NHPA. These studies did not exist prior to the Federal Government funding that enabled the setting up of the MRC.

The initial five MRC projects involve pregnancy and mothers and babies health; inflammatory bowel disease; head and neck cancer; systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) and the role of the microbiome in thrombotic disorders.

Our MRC research now spans cancer control; cardiovascular health; mental health, diabetes mellitus and obesity; asthma, arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions and dementia.



ACUTE BRAIN INJURY RESEARCH

The Department of Intensive Care Medicine at St George Hospital has a national and international reputation in clinical excellence and research. A key component of the research program includes a series of studies in patients with acute brain injuries – either due to medical conditions such as a stroke or following trauma usually sustained in road traffic accidents.

Professor John Myburgh AO, Professor of Intensive Care Medicine at UNSW, who leads the Research Program in the Department of Intensive Care Medicine at St George Hospital, said that “there is an imperative to constantly evaluate current and new treatments in patients with acute brain injuries as small improvements in brain function may have a substantive impact on how survivors with these devastating injuries survive, feel and function.”

In 2016, Professor Myburgh was awarded a substantive Capacity Building Grant from the St George and Sutherland Medical Research Foundation, to develop and enhance the brain injury research program. Central to this grant were funds to support specific clinical trials to determine and define the best body temperature to treat patients with traumatic brain injuries. This is major area of uncertainty for clinicians worldwide with wide variations in clinical practice. These studies, led by Dr Manoj Saxena, who was awarded his PhD from UNSW for this work, identified key temperature thresholds where brain function is optimal following acute brain injury.



“This has been a tremendous investment by the Foundation for our Research Program, for which we are very appreciative, but more importantly will assist us in the treatment of our patients” said Professor Myburgh.



LIVER CANCER RESEARCH RECEIVES BOOST FROM CANCER PATIENT SIR OWEN GLENN

The \$3 million donation from philanthropist and businessman, Sir Owen Glenn will fund a major liver cancer research program for the next three years.

“I am privileged to support the important work of the St George & Sutherland Medical Research Foundation. By investing in liver cancer research, I hope we can find better, more effective ways of treating this disease – and preventing it all together,” said Sir Owen, Glenn who is currently undergoing treatment for liver cancer himself.

The Sir Owen Glenn Liver Cancer Research Program ultimately aims to prevent liver cancer but will also work to optimise the treatment of the cancer once it develops.

The research will be led by Australia’s first Microbiome Research Centre (MRC), combining collaborative efforts from main teaching hospitals, leading Australian universities, research institutes and international collaborators who are leaders in the field of cancer.

For patients with liver cancer, the research is likely to impact on success of its treatment. For example, manipulation of the microbiome may positively impact the body’s immunotherapy response to liver cancer.

At the pre-cancer stage, the results will have key preventative implications in terms of earlier identification of patients at risk of developing liver cancer.



L to R: Associate Professor Amany Zekry, Sir Owen Glenn and Professor Emad El-Omar

Lead scientist, Associate Professor Amany Zekry says results are expected within three years, and the findings will pave the way for human interventional trials.

Ms Jacquie Stratford, CEO of the St George & Sutherland Medical Research Foundation said Sir Owen’s gift was the largest single private donation the St George & Sutherland Medical Research Foundation has received.

“Sir Owen’s generous donation has established a world class research program in liver cancer, one that will deliver real progress in the fight against this global killer.”

The Microbiome Research Centre is a partnership between St George & Sutherland Medical Research Foundation, The University of NSW and the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District. www.microbiome.org.au

L to R: Professor Ian Cook, Dr Peter Wu and Dr Michal Szczesniak

Congratulations to Dr Peter Wu, SSMRF scholarship recipient, who graduated PhD

“Pharyngeal and oesophageal compliance - the clinical utility of Endoluminal Functional Lumen Imaging Probe in managing dysphagia” from UNSW on 10 November 2018.



BEACHSIDE DASH FUN RUN

On Sunday 9th September, more than 700 people took part in the 11th annual Beachside Dash, helping to raise over \$60,000 for the St George & Sutherland Medical Research Foundation.

Held at Peter Depena Reserve, Dolls Point, the family friendly event is a fun day offering 2, 5 and 10km races with plenty of pre and post race activities.

Special thanks to the 2018 Beachside Dash sponsors: St. George Bank, St George Private Hospital, Ramsgate RSL, Sydney Airport, McGrath Estate Agents (St George, Brighton Le-Sands, Revesby and Sans Souci), Austbrokers SPT, Bayside Council, The Running Movement, Novotel Sydney Brighton Beach, Tynan Motors, Bates Bikes, CWE Audio Visual, Runnulla, Cliff Lewis Printing and Sydney Elite Massage.

If you are interested in becoming a Beachside Dash sponsor, or getting involved in 2019 please contact SSMRF on event@ssmrf.com.au | 02 9098 4042



CHARITY GOLF DAY

On the 23rd August 2018, St George & Sutherland Medical Research Foundation held their annual charity golf day at The Australian Golf Club.

The day raised \$18,000 to support innovative projects at St George and Sutherland hospitals.



2018 SSMRF Golf Day
Winning Team:
Solutions Plumbing

MICHAEL TYNAN MEMORIAL CHALLENGE

Supporters of The Michael Tynan Memorial Challenge were out in force on scooters, on foot and on the water from Wollongong to the shire on Saturday 20 October to raise funds for medical research at SSMRF and UOW. In conjunction with the MTMC Challenge, the annual MTMC Gala Ball was held on Saturday 3rd November. Thank you to everyone who supported this year's challenge and ball.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

16th May 2019

Book now for the SSMRF Annual Golf Day at the Australian Golf Club.

8th September 2019

Join in all the fun at the annual Beachside Dash.

ST GEORGE & SUTHERLAND MEDICAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR - PROFESSOR JOHN EDMONDS

As the end of the year is fast approaching, I would like to thank everyone who has donated to St George & Sutherland Medical Research Foundation.



I want to acknowledge our long-term supporters and founding partners the St. George Bank, we are truly appreciative of your commitment and belief in the Foundation. I would also like to acknowledge the funding and support the Foundation receives from a wonderful group of regular donors, including some of our hospitals' doctors and community members and all our event sponsors including Tynan Motors who host the annual Michael Tynan Memorial Challenge. Without your support we would not be able to continue to fund important research in our hospitals.

The Foundation has always had two major aims: first, to raise the research culture of our hospitals by fostering good research across the breadth of the biomedical endeavours of our staff; second, to help create a major centre of research which becomes of national and international significance and provides important benefits to our patients.

The Foundation is continuously working towards these objectives. For our first eight years we provided just under \$2 million for almost 50 Development Grants, Capacity Building Grants and Scholarships.

Two years ago, with the help of a Federal Government Grant of \$4 million we were able, in conjunction with UNSW, to initiate our second aim: the establishment of the Microbiome Research Centre (MRC) at St George Hospital. The MRC, with its stellar leadership, staff and collaborations, has already been recognised as a major research initiative.

Funding for the MRC is wonderful and exciting, but the conditions of its gift mean that it can only be used for MRC-related purposes. This has meant that the Foundation, in the skilled managerial hands of our CEO Jacquie Stratford, has been working hard to allow us, once again, to offer regular, annual Development Grants.

It is a great pleasure to be able to announce that in 2019 we will again be calling for applications for Development Grants from across the diverse fields of medical research undertaken in our hospitals.

With this exciting news planned for 2019, we look forward to keeping you updated on the programs and achievements of our talented researchers.

