

# NEWSLETTER

## SEPTEMBER 2021



## FROM THE ACVA LEADERSHIP

We hope you are all keeping well in these difficult times. Despite the many disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been working hard behind the scenes:

- launching the ACvA's new **Awards for research**. The awards are currently with the judging panels so watch this space. We can't wait to recognise, innovators, translators and mentors alike;
- supporting the CV Champions and Mentoring Programs both of which are completing their first year of delivery and have had really positive feedback and engagement;
- meeting with our Flagships and facilitating new engagements with our NCRIS collaborators led by **BioPlatforms Australia**
- supporting stronger partnerships with ACTA and AHRA; and
- importantly preparing for our AGM on 25 November – your opportunity to have a say and contribute to the ACvA's governance and leadership.

## ACVA ENDORSEMENT OF MRFF MISSION FOR CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH ROADMAP AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Minister Hunt has recently endorsed the Roadmap and Implementation Plan for **Cardiovascular Health**.

The Minister has also announced the **next round of funding** under the Federal Government's allocation of \$220M over 10 years to contribute to the delivery of the Medical Research Future Fund's (MRFF) Cardiovascular Health Mission, which demonstrates a decisive commitment to supporting research to significantly improve cardiovascular health and provides a unique opportunity for the whole sector to unite and reimagine how they undertake research and spur innovation to deliver the lofty goals of the Mission.

The ACvA applauds the Government's significant, ongoing commitment to supporting research into our nation's biggest killer – cardiovascular disease. The ACvA fully endorses the MRFF Cardiovascular Health Mission Roadmap and Implementation Plan and is committed to supporting the Government's objectives by facilitating a nationally cohesive and collaborative approach with common goals to greatly accelerate and strengthen the impact of research and innovation. Helping our members to come together and work on the most urgent unmet needs in cardiovascular disease is core business for the operational team and the ACvA's leadership. Read the full statement, endorsed by the ACvA Board on our [website](#).



## NEW INSTITUTIONAL MEMBER

We would like to welcome the Hunter Medical Research Institute as the newest institutional members to the ACvA and look forward to working closely with you.

Institutional membership confers free membership to five senior/postdoctoral positions and unlimited Higher Degree Research students - a benefit that was warmly welcomed by HMRI.

## NEW IMPLEMENTATION AND POLICY FLAGSHIP CO-DIRECTOR

We would also like to welcome **Professor Julie Redfern** as the Co-Director of the Implementation and Policy Flagship. Professor Redfern will work alongside Professor Garry Jennings to lead the development and implementation of the Flagship’s strategic objectives with the Flagship Advisory Group to help support the ACvA’s vision of a thriving cardiovascular ecosystem serving health and the economy.



## NATIONAL DRUG DISCOVERY CENTRE – CVD SUCCESS

The ACvA would like to congratulate Dr Lauren May and Dr Chengxue Helena Qin as beneficiaries of the Australian Government subsidies to access WEHI’s National Drug Discovery Centre. The projects will utilise the Centre’s technologies to create and improve therapies for patient treatment:

- Dr Lauren May, from Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences at Monash University, will lead a project to develop new classes of medicines with the potential to treat drug-resistant epilepsy.
- Dr Chengxue Helena Qin, from Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences at Monash University, and her team have identified a new protein target to treat pulmonary hypertension, a condition defined by high blood pressure in the lungs. Currently incurable, pulmonary hypertension is a fatal disease with a rapidly growing prevalence. The team will develop a suite of new compounds that will act on this protein to slow the disease progression.

Last but not least, we offer our congratulations to the ACvA members who were successful in the recent round of the Targeted Translation Research Accelerator (TTRA) Grants and NHMRC Investigator Grants:

### TTRA Grants

Prof Shaun Jackson	Development of novel safe adjunctive antithrombotic therapies for the improved treatment of acute ischaemic stroke	Heart Research Institute and University of Sydney	\$750,000
A/Prof Steven Wise	Local Regulation of Inflammation for the Treatment of Peripheral Arterial Disease	University of Sydney	\$739,128
	NIRAF Guidewire for Detection of Unstable Coronary Plaques to Prevent Heart Attack and Death	Nirtek Pty Ltd	\$750,000

## NHMRC Investigator Grants

Professor Sally Dunwoodie	Towards a Mechanistic Understanding of the Causes of Congenital Heart Disease and Associated Extra-Cardiac Anomalies	UNSW	\$2.99m
Professor Julie Redfern	Modernising cardiac rehabilitation and secondary prevention of heart disease	University of Sydney	\$2.87m
Professor David Kaye	Better care for HFpEF patients through integrated basic, clinical and translational research	Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute	\$2.74m
Professor Thomas Marwick	Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in Cancer Survivors by Recognition and Treatment of Subclinical Disease	Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute	\$1.94m
Professor Richard Harvey	A single cell, single molecule and multi-omics approach to identifying novel targets in heart failure	UNSW	\$3.03m
Professor Peter Meikle	Integrating lipidomic, metabolomic and genomic studies to define causal metabolic pathways in cardiometabolic disease: Delivering precision medicine solutions for Australia	Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute	\$2.43m
Professor Bob Graham	Building heart muscle to treat cardiomyopathies	UNSW	\$2.35m
Dr Emily Wong	Deciphering the impact of non-coding mutations in congenital heart disease	UNSW	\$1.57m
Dr Rachel Climie	Primordial prevention of cardiovascular disease from childhood	University of Tasmania	\$650,740

We would also like to offer our ongoing support to those who missed out in this round and will be working members to introduce some new ideas to support you all as move towards the end of the year.

## NEW EMERGING LEADERS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

With some members of the Emerging Leaders Committee (ELC) reaching the end of their term, we recently circulated a call for new members. We received over 30 outstanding applications and had the difficult task of narrowing this down to just seven vacancies.

Without further ado, we warmly welcome our new ELC members!



**Dr Ashenafi Betrie**  
Florey Institute



**Dr Cher-Rin Chong**  
University of Adelaide



**A/Prof Melody Ding**  
University of Sydney



**Dr Kate Hayward**  
Florey Institute



**Dr Jatin Patel**  
Queensland University of Technology



**Dr Chengxue Helena Qin**  
Monash University



**Dr Celine Santiago**  
Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute

The new members will join existing members, Dr Emma Thomas, Dr Katrina Colafella, Dr Niamh Chapman, Dr Lauren Blekkenhorst, A/Prof Sally Inglis and the new Chair, A/Prof Anna Calkin. A/Prof Anna Calkin joined the ELC in 2018 and has been instrumental in establishing and managing the very successful ACvA Mentoring Program. Anna has recently accepted the role of Chair of the Committee and has really hit the ground running. We look forward to working with and seeing the exciting new initiatives that come from the Committee in the upcoming years.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the previous ELC members, Dr Dean Picone, Dr Rachel Climie, Dr Joanne Tan, Dr Jason Wu, A/Prof Steven Wise for all of their hard work and dedication to the ELC over the years. A special thanks to A/Prof Francine Marques, the inaugural Chair of the ELC, who is stepping down as Chair and taking on an advisory role to help in the transition. We thank you, Fran for your leadership, dedication, generosity and guidance. We hope you enjoyed your time on the ELC.

## ACVA ACTIVITIES

### Save the date: Heart Valve Disease Discussion Panel

**Baker**  
HEART & DIABETES INSTITUTE

**ACvA**  
Australian Cardiovascular Alliance

## Heart Valve Disease Discussion Panel

Join the ACvA Implementation and Policy Flagship on a discussion to explore policy and implementation strategies for heart valve disease

### Presenters

- Professor Tom Marwick - Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute
- A/Professor Seana Gall - Menzies Institute for Medical Research
- Professor Ajay Mahal - Economics, University of Melbourne
- Professor Marj Moodie - Health Economics, Deakin University
- Professor Lan Gao - Health Economics, Deakin University

**THURSDAY 21 OCTOBER 2021**  
**12:30 – 1:30PM AEDT**

**REGISTER HERE**

Last month, the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute released a whitepaper putting a spotlight on our nation's rising rates of undiagnosed heart valve disease and examining critical evidence into the burden of disease and approaches to help address this issue.

Along with authors from the whitepaper and the ACvA Implementation and Policy Flagship Advisory Group, the Flagship Co-Directors, Professors Garry Jennings and Julie Redfern warmly invite all those interested to join a discussion panel to **explore strategies and implementation priorities for heart valve disease**.

**WHEN:** Thursday 21 October, 12:30 – 1:30pm AEST

**WHERE:** Register via Zoom [HERE](#)

## ACvA Commercialisation webinar 2

# Commercialisation Stories

Friday 24 September 2021 12:30 – 1:30 pm AEST

Register [HERE](#)



**Professor Avril Robertson, University of Queensland**



Prof Robertson is Director of Biotechnology at the School of Chemistry and Molecular Biosciences, University of Queensland, and sits on the Board of Directors of the National Professional Science Masters Association in the USA. Prof Robertson was part of a multidisciplinary team and the IP behind Inflazome Ltd's drug candidates for inhibiting activation of the NRLP3 inflammasome, which was recently acquired by Roche for €380 million. She completed her PhD in bio-organic chemistry at the University of St Andrews, Scotland in 2000 and had a successful 10 years in the UK biotechnology and drug discovery industry before moving to Australia.

**Professor Tony Weiss AM, University of Sydney**



Professor Weiss is the NHMRC Senior Leadership Fellow, McCaughey Chair in Biochemistry, and Professor of Biochemistry & Molecular Biotechnology in the Charles Perkins Centre at the University of Sydney, where he leads Tissue Engineering & Regenerative Medicine. He founded the clinical stage company Elastagen Pty Ltd which was sold to Allergan and AbbVie for a total of US\$260 million. He is the named inventor on 165 awarded international patents in human tropoelastin, which gives tissue its elasticity and enhances the repair of scars and wounds. Tony is the recipient of many accolades and awards, including the Order of Australia

The ACvA hosted the second commercialisation webinar in its series, 'Commercialisation Stories' last Friday, 24 September 2021. We heard some amazing commercialisation journeys, and our speakers offered their tips and tricks into anyone interested in entering this space. There was keen interest from our audience, who asked many insightful questions.

If you were unable to attend and would like to view the recording, please email [acva@ozheart.org](mailto:acva@ozheart.org) for a link.

### ACvA Sponsorship Program

The ACvA receives periodic requests for sponsorship, in-kind contributions and/or endorsement of conferences, events and member activities. The ACvA also receives requests to distribute information, invitations and other materials from member organisations and others, which may be implied as endorsing the activity or material distributed.

To assist us with assessing these requests, the ACvA has developed guidelines that will be used under the ACvA's Sponsorship Program.

For more details on the Sponsorship Program and to apply, please head to our [website](#).

### ACvA Basic Science Advisory Group

In July, we circulated an EOI for a Basic Science Advisory Group, co-chaired by ACvA Board members Prof Jamie Vandenberg and A/Prof Christina Bursill, to consider the role of basic science in the cardiovascular landscape and how ACvA can facilitate these interactions.



The Basic Science Advisory Group members joining the Chairs to help with this work are:

- Prof Ben Freedman                      Heart Research Institute

- Prof Judy de Haan Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute
- Prof Richard Harvey Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute
- Prof David Howells University of Tasmania
- A/Prof Nathan Palpant University of Queensland
- Dr Alex Pinto Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute
- Dr Nicola Smith UNSW
- Dr Jibrán Wali University of Sydney
- A/Prof Morag Young Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute

The group will undertake consultations and review with a broad range of stakeholders and synthesise recommendations for the ACvA Board.

### Update on ACvA's Early Phase Device Clinical Network Project: Ventri Clinical



Many thanks to all those who responded following the ACvA's efforts to create a clinical network of clinicians, sites and services for CVD device testing! Headed by Anthony Murray and supported by Kerry Doyle, the project has a website and name: *Ventri Clinical*. The project is supported by MTPConnect and matched funding from the Charles Perkins Centre and the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute.

Ventri Clinical is marketing Australia's capacity for effective device testing to the world. Covering everything from preclinical testing and animal models through to FIH and pivotal trials, Ventri Clinical has already helped bring CVD medtech work in for network members who include some of the country's preeminent R&D names.

Ventri Clinical is gradually tying in support for start-ups at home, and will be profiling these in due course.

To date, Ventri Clinical has 37 entities and clinicians involved, most of whom you can currently find at <https://www.ventriclinical.org/> If you haven't already submitted your expression of interest, please do so here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XHGXNLT>

Please also follow Ventri Clinical on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/ventri-clinical/>

Warm thanks to Meng Hsu and Catherine Shang at the ACvA for their ongoing support, as well as Gemma Figtree, Jason Kovacic and industry members Abbott Vascular, Edwards Life Sciences, Boston Scientific, Medtronic and Biotronik for their thought leadership and pragmatic advice.

Best regards, Anthony Murray

### Call for Applications: Biomedical Engineering Flagship Advisory Group

We are seeking applications from current ACvA members to join the Biomedical Engineering Flagship Advisory Group. We currently have two positions available – one for a biomedical researcher and one for an industry member.

The Flagship Advisory Group will work alongside the Biomedical Engineering Flagship Directors to provide specific expert advice and technical knowledge to develop national collaborative opportunities and improve engagement with key stakeholders. The position description can be found [here](#).

We welcome a balanced group taking gender, geographical distribution and a balance between established experts and younger promising scientists into consideration. We also call for consumer representation on each of the Flagship Advisory Groups.

Membership is initially for one year (renewable) and the Group will meet at least every quarter. Meetings will be via teleconference or face-to-face as required.

Please submit applications to [acva@ozheart.org](mailto:acva@ozheart.org), by COB Friday 15 October 2021. Applications should include a **cover letter, addressing requirements in the position description and include contact details of two referees.**

For further information, please contact Kerry Doyle; E: [kerry.doyle@ozheart.org](mailto:kerry.doyle@ozheart.org)

### **Specialist Working Groups update**

- Peripheral Arterial Disease – The group is establishing a website and social media page to create a patient forum group and better engage with consumers, and raise awareness for this often under-recognised condition.
- Environmental Determinants of CV Health – A green paper is being developed and a national summit is in the planning stages for mid-November 2021.

### **Clinical themes workshop update**

- Expressions of interest for the upcoming clinical themes workshops have now closed. We received applications from over 100 participants. The Operational Team are working with the Board to collate all the responses and priorities ahead of the first workshop in late October.

### **AHRA CV Working Group update**

- ACvA has facilitated initial meetings with the cardiovascular leads of AHRTCs across the nation. The group is working towards the aspirational goal of achieving equity of cardiovascular health in each AHRTC.

### **ACvA – WACRA – Heart Foundation roundtable update**

- The ACvA is presenting at a Lunch and Learn session, hosted by the WACRA. We will be talking about our work and how we can increase the partnership with WACRA, the Heart Foundation, CEO (WA) Sarah Fordham will also attend and provide a Heart Foundation update. Register for the event [HERE](#).

### **QCVRN Management Committee update**

- The ACvA Executive Director, Kerry Doyle, was recently invited to join the QCVRN Management Committee, providing closer alignment between the two organisations.

## **NETWORK AND PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES**

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### **STOPstroke Survey**

*A message from Stroke Research Program Manager, Christine Farmer*

Did you know that one in four people will have a stroke in their lifetime? Did you know that most strokes are preventable?

Our research program Synergies TO Prevent stroke, or STOPstroke would like to hear the questions clinicians and the community have about preventing stroke.

By taking part in our survey, you'll make sure that future research addresses the questions that matter most. You may have questions about what you can do to reduce your chance of having a

stroke, or your questions might be about what the government could do to help less people have strokes.

The survey takes about 10 minutes and is completely anonymous. Take part today.

<https://redcap.utas.edu.au/surveys/?s=CDXJNRLKKL>

This study has been approved by the University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics Committee (H0024539)

## NSW CVRN, the HEART Pitch Competition

*A message from NSWCVRN Manager, Sally McNeil*

The NSW Cardiovascular Research Network recently hosted The HEART Pitch, a new competition for early and mid-career researchers and PhD students to pitch their research in 3 minutes to a live audience. Over 150 CVD researchers across NSW watched this event with 29 up and coming researchers presenting.

The calibre of the research presentations was outstanding, and the breadth of research presented was vast from Basic and Biomedical through to Public Health research. The judges had a very difficult task selecting the winners of each category and believed that congratulations must be given to all participants of The HEART Pitch.

Congratulations to the winners and highly commended participants of The HEART Pitch categories:

### Early-Career Researcher Category

**Winner** **Faraz Pathan**, University of Sydney. *An incentivised exercise and dietary work place health intervention (FitBites)*

**Highly Commended** **Tess Reynolds**, University of Sydney. *Move to the ACROBEAT: safer, smarter and clearer cardiac imaging*

### Mid-Career Researcher Category

**Winner** **Kirsten Coupland**, University of Newcastle. *Capacity of statins to improve stroke outcome: clearing a path to implementation*

**Highly Commended** **Michael Stevens**, University of NSW. *Smart Artificial Hearts: What can we learn from self-driving cars?*

### PhD Category

**Winner** **Praveen Indraratna**, University of NSW. *TeleClinical Care: A digital health revolution in cardiology*

**Highly Commended** **Aeryne Lee**, University of Sydney. *Next Generation Pulmonary Heart Valve Replacements*

### People's Choice Award

**Winner** **Mathew Hollings**, University of Sydney. *Australian cardiac rehabilitation in Australia: How do we stack up?*

**Highly Commended** **Anna Singleton**, University of Sydney. *Heart Health after Breast Cancer: A rollercoaster of good news and bad news*

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

### Therapeutic Innovation Australia (TIA) Pipeline Accelerator

TIA has developed a voucher-style researcher access scheme - the Pipeline Accelerator - to facilitate and encourage access to TIA facilities. The Pipeline Accelerator provides SMEs and researchers the access to one or more facilities associated with TIA, including core facilities and HTS centres.

Funding, via a fixed-value reimbursement to the service provider, is intended to further reduce the cost of access to a specific capability. Projects are assessed by an external panel on the basis of

their scientific quality and potential for development of a therapeutic product. Vouchers of up to \$50,000 are available.

Applications CLOSE **29 October 2021**

For more information, please see: <https://www.therapeuticinnovation.com.au/accelerator>

### **Targeted Translation Research Accelerator (TTRA) Program Round 2**

The TTRA Research Projects funding can provide between \$200,000 - \$750,000 to help eligible organisations develop innovative preventative, diagnostic, therapeutic and/or disease management products/solutions for identified priorities associated with diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

TTRA Research Projects Round 2 Expressions of Interests must address one of the following Priority Areas:

- Priority 1: Atherosclerosis, including cerebrovascular disease
- Priority 2: Cardiomyopathy and heart failure
- Priority 3: Obesity as it relates to diabetes
- Priority 4: Mental health as it relates to diabetes
- Priority 5: Glucose control in type 1 diabetes (T1D), type 2 diabetes (T2D), double diabetes and/or gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM)

Applications CLOSE **4 November 2021**

For more information, please see:

<https://www.mtpconnect.org.au/programs/TTRA/ResearchProjects>

### **Wellcome Trust Early Career Awards**

This scheme provides funding for early-career researchers from any discipline who are ready to develop their research identity. Through innovative projects, they will deliver shifts in understanding that could improve human life, health and wellbeing. By the end of the award, they will be ready to lead their own independent research programme. The host organisation must be based in either the UK, Republic of Ireland, or low-or middle-income countries (apart from India and mainland China)

Applications CLOSE **26 October 2021**

For more information, please see: <https://wellcome.org/grant-funding/schemes/early-career-awards>

### **Wellcome Trust Discovery Awards**

This scheme provides funding for established researchers and teams from any discipline who want to pursue bold and creative research ideas to deliver significant shifts in understanding that could improve human life, health and wellbeing. The host organisation must be based in either the UK, Republic of Ireland, or low-or middle-income countries (apart from India and mainland China)

Applications CLOSE **11 November 2021**

For more information, please see: <https://wellcome.org/grant-funding/schemes/discovery-awards>

### **Wellcome Trust Career Development Awards**

This scheme provides funding for mid-career researchers from any discipline who have the potential to be international research leaders. They will develop their research capabilities, drive innovative programmes of work and deliver significant shifts in understanding that could improve human life,

health and wellbeing. The host organisation must be based in either the UK, Republic of Ireland, or low-or middle-income countries (apart from India and mainland China)

Applications CLOSE **16 November 2021**

For more information, please see: <https://wellcome.org/grant-funding/schemes/career-development-awards>

### **Ian Potter Foundation Healthy - Medical Research**

This funding opportunity aims to support the provision of equipment and capital infrastructure to outstanding medical research groups. The Foundation prioritises applications with evidence of collaboration. In general, the recommended minimum grant amount for institutions and organisations is \$100,000 in this program area.

Applications OPEN **15 November 2021**

For more information, please see: <https://www.ianpotter.org.au/what-we-support/medical-research/>

### **MRFF Cardiovascular Health Mission**

The MRFF Cardiovascular Health Mission's intent is to accelerate Australian-led research to advance cardiovascular health through the creation of a world-class sustainable eco-system underpinned by excellence, collaboration, innovation, consumer engagement and commercialisation, and embedded in the health care system.

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 understanding of cardiovascular disease risk, including biological mechanisms
- **Stream 2** (Targeted Call for Research): support effective adoption and adherence of preventive health interventions for cardiovascular disease and stroke
- **Stream 3** (Targeted Call for Research): accelerates equitable patient access to best care that results in best possible outcomes
- **Stream 4** (Incubator): conduct small-scale development projects will establish feasible, evidence-based approaches for identifying and targeting personalised lifelong care approaches, to prevent further stroke or heart events
- **Stream 5** (Incubator): conduct small-scale development projects will establish feasible, evidence-based approaches for developing new treatments for recovery with better understanding of the biology of recovery, leading to improved monitoring and new treatments.

Applications CLOSE **23 February 2022**

For more information, please see: <https://www.grants.gov.au/Go/Show?GoUuid=d35a8d63-3e38-4dc7-9077-e5f10fb4222c>