

# NEWSLETTER

## DECEMBER 2021



## FROM THE ACvA LEADERSHIP

As we come to the end of 2021, it's natural to reflect on the year that was. It was unpredictable, challenging and unlike any other. However, despite the difficulties, in many ways it was business as usual here.

The emergence of a new virus doesn't reduce the statistics for cardiovascular disease. It creates new implications which continue to highlight the importance of what we are trying to do as an organisation and sector. So, our advocacy, collaboration and representation continue, and this final newsletter of the year is in recognition of everything that was achieved during 2021.

We wish you safe and happy holidays and hope that it's a chance to rest and re-set after a challenging year.

## ACvA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On 25 November, we held our Annual General Meeting. We'd like to say a heartfelt thank you to our retiring Board Members Professor Stephen Nicholls, Professor David Kaye and Professor Karlheinz Peters. We appreciate the advocacy, guidance and support you gave to ACvA during your time on the Board. We would also like to introduce our new Board Directors, **Professor Andre La Gerche**, **Professor Alta Schutte**, and **Professor Christopher Sobey**. They will serve alongside Professor Gemma Figtree (President), Professor Christina Bursill (Treasurer), Professor Jamie Vandenberg (Secretary) and Professors Kerry-Anne Rye, Jason Kovacic, Chris Reid and Doctors Zoe Wainer and Chloe Flutter (Board Directors). We're excited about the unique experience and skillsets they will bring to the ACvA Board and look forward to their input in 2022.



## ACvA INAUGURAL EXCELLENCE IN CARDIOVASCULAR RESEARCH AWARDS

This year we celebrated our inaugural **ACvA Excellence in Cardiovascular Research Awards**. We see these as a chance to unify and celebrate our peers and colleagues. There is incredible work being done in the sector and we want everyone to know about it.

After consultation with members, three new awards were created to acknowledge and honour the achievements of Australia's cardiovascular research community. The three awards are inclusive of the cardiovascular research spectrum and encompass all career stages.

**The Gamechanger award** recognises innovations and ideas that have challenged the norm and in turn, transformed our way of doing or thinking about things.

**The Translation award** demonstrates the significant process of turning observations from the laboratory and clinic into interventions that have improved the health of individuals and the public.

**The Mentor award** recognises the individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary leadership throughout their careers by going the extra mile and providing guidance and support to our emerging researchers.

A pandemic couldn't stop us from celebrating these amazing people and their research. We held the Awards on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> December online and in-person, at partner hubs around Australia.

Congratulations again to all Nominees, Finalists and Winners! You can find a complete list of all the Finalists and their research [here](#).

And it's never too early to start thinking about nominations for our 2022 Awards.

### ACvA's 2021 Excellence in Cardiovascular Research Award Winners



Game Changer Award Winner  
Dr Sarah Scheuer



Translation Award Winner  
Professor Clive May



Mentor Award Winner  
Professor Geoffrey Head

## ACvA ACTIVITIES

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### Emerging Leaders & Capacity Building

Capacity building is a priority area for the ACvA and The Emerging Leaders Committee (ELC) is an important initiative for us. The ELC works collaboratively to develop and provide support for EMCR ACvA members. To understand the issues facing EMCRs across Australia, two focus groups were held surveying the community for potential solutions and opportunities. These will inform our future advocacy and program delivery.

The ACvA ELC facilitated a year-long, cross-sectoral mentorship program. Mentors were drawn from industry, policy, clinical trials, and venture capital. 33 mentor-mentee pairs have successfully completed the first year of the program and an evaluation is in progress.

ELC members also took part in the CV Champions (Science Communication) Program this year. 54 members participated in a 12-month science communication education program. Following on from the success of this program and at the request of EMCRs future programs will include professional leadership skills and development.

A range of exciting new initiatives are coming next year. The mentoring program has been redesigned to include quarterly intakes and a dedicated industry mentorship branch managed by Dr Ashenafi Betrie and Dr Chengxue Helena Qin.

Dr Niamh Chapman, Dr Cher-Rin Chong, Dr Katrina Colafella and Dr Kate Hayward will manage the expanded CV champions program to be launched in April 2022.

A podcast series will be run by Dr Kate Hayward, Dr Jatin Patel and Dr Celine Santiago. There will also be increased networking and stakeholder engagement opportunities led by Professor Sally Inglis, Dr Melody Ding and Dr Emma Thomas.

### Industry Engagement - Ventri Clinical



Ventri Clinical now features over 40 clinical service providers, clinicians and engineers. The project was originally backed by the Victor Chang CRI, Charles Perkins Centre and MTPConnect to connect and market Australia's capacity to execute effective clinical trials and testing in cardiovascular medtech.

The network's 'Shop Window' is operational and can be found at [VentriClinical.org](https://ventriclinical.org). The website also features listings of global CvD medtech studies, courtesy of ScanMedicine. Trials by ClinTrial Refer will also soon be added to the site.

New members are joining every month, so please get in touch with [anthony.murray@ozheart.org](mailto:anthony.murray@ozheart.org) if you're keen to be involved.

### NCRIS

Over the past two years, we've enjoyed an ongoing and productive partnership with Bioplatforms Australia (BPA). The Research Catalyst Program, sponsored by BPA, allocated \$200,000 to six ACvA recipients. It's been a huge success leveraging a further \$4 million in funding. Congratulations to all the researchers and their teams. We look forward to seeing the progress of these projects.

This year, we've also expanded our engagement with other existing National Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) health-related networks including National Imaging Facility (NIF), Therapeutic Innovation Australia (TIA), Phenomics Australia (PA) and Population Health Research Network (PHRN).

## Clinical Themes Initiative



Our Clinical Themes Initiative has brought the CV and Stroke research sectors together to address unmet needs in six clinical theme areas that include: Heart Failure, Stroke, Hypertension, Arrhythmia, Coronary Artery Disease and improving CV outcomes for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



An open EOI was undertaken with the community identifying their top 3 research priorities. Leading the Hypertension Clinical Themes initiative, Professors Alta Schutte and Markus Schlaich met on 29<sup>th</sup> November with key opinion leaders from the Stroke, Hypertension and Arrhythmia fields to identify the emerging topics, champions, and additional stakeholders to engage.

We look forward to continuing the momentum at additional workshops which are scheduled throughout 2022.

## Basic Science Consultation

Our Basic Science Advisory Committee was formed so that we could have better engagement with and representation for our Basic Scientist members. Professors Christina Bursill and Jamie Vandenberg lead the Basic Science Advisory Committee which has 11 members who were selected through an EOI process. The Committee has met throughout the latter part of the year to discuss proposed advocacy approaches, the existing ACvA Flagship Structure in relation to Basic Science/Scientists and the role of a Scientific Advisory Board.

Watch this space for outcomes from these discussions and expect to see increased inclusion of Basic Science in our structure and advocacy.

## Clinical Quality Indicators and Health Leadership Forum

There is national agreement regarding the development of CV clinical quality indicators and the concept of state-based Health Leadership Research Forums (HLRF) which then feed up into a national forum.

On 17<sup>th</sup> November, ACvA facilitated the first national HLRF co-chaired by Dr Nick Coatsworth and Professor Keith McNeil. It was attended by senior officers from all States, Territories and the Commonwealth, as well as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the Safety and Quality Commission and the National Heart Foundation of Australia.

As one of ACvA's strategic initiatives, these CV HLRFs are an exciting development. They provide strategic forums at both a state and national level to bring together data/evidence and expertise and allow health leadership to:

- Identify gaps and inequities
- Prioritise areas for research investment and translation
- Support prioritised implementation into the health system

The next national HLRF is being planned for Q1 2022, and we are working with each state and territory to establish local forums to ensure relevance at the jurisdictional level and feed up in to the national HLRF. For more information on these forums, please contact Kerry Doyle on [Kerry.doyle@ozheart.org](mailto:Kerry.doyle@ozheart.org)



## Clinical Trials

Earlier in the year, we brought speakers together from Academia, Government and Industry for the "Building the Future for Cardiovascular Clinical Trials – Towards a National Clinical Trials Enabling Platform" roundtable. Chaired by Professor John Zalberg OAM, former Chair,

Australian Clinical Trials Alliance, speakers presented and discussed the current clinical trial landscape and ways they are working to make Australia a premier site for CVD clinical trials.

We will continue further development and advocacy of the Cardiovascular Trial Enabling Platform (CV-TEP) Proposal. The CV-TEP will provide a framework for national collaborations, sharing research and expertise and working closely with partners such as ANZACT, ACTA and ASTN.

The ACVA's Clinical Trials Flagship co-chaired by Professors Chris Reid and Vincent Thijs is leading this initiative. For more information please contact Dr Catherine Shang at [Catherine.shang@ozheart.org](mailto:Catherine.shang@ozheart.org).

## Joint National CV Implementation and Policy Roundtable

We are currently planning a joint national roundtable meeting with the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand and the National Heart Foundation of Australia to discuss implementation and policy solutions. The aim of the roundtable is to prioritise action and identify research gaps in prevention, acute treatment and secondary prevention.

The outcomes of this roundtable will form the foundations for a national implementation roadmap. Our Implementation and Policy Flagship will also use this opportunity to identify key research and evidence gaps for further work. This event is planned for 10th March 2022 at the Shine Dome in Canberra.

## FLAGSHIP & SPECIALIST WORKING GROUP HIGHLIGHTS 2021

Our flagships promote collaboration and research excellence. They bring together the best teams to develop solutions for cardiovascular disease and are a chance to drive impact and deliver capacity building initiatives and priorities. It was another big year for the Flagships with new initiatives, increased engagement and tangible results. Here are some of the highlights.

Drug Discovery & Translation		Biomedical Engineering	
	<p>Co-directed by Professors Rebecca Ritchie and Grant Drummond</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advice on grant review panel and framework</li><li>• Thought leadership in basic sciences review</li><li>• Scoping work with NCRIS capabilities on CV preclinical model</li></ul>		<p>Directed by Professor Peter Barlis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Development of key themes and overarching framework proposal</li><li>• Input, advice and participation in Ventri Clinical</li><li>• Input and advice on industry pitchfest, planned for 2022</li></ul>
Precision Medicine		Clinical Trials	
	<p>Co-directed by Professors Alicia Jenkins and Peter Miele</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support and advice mapping exercise</li><li>• Support in building relationships with NCRIS capabilities</li><li>• Development of CAD cohort Platform with Australian Biocommons (NCRIS-supported)</li></ul>		<p>Co-directed by Professors Chris Reid and Vincent Thijs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developing CV-TEP proposal</li><li>• Significant input to Commonwealth clinical trials consultations</li><li>• Contribution to industry framework</li><li>• RART grant - women and CVD</li></ul>
			



## Big Data

Co-directed by Professors Dominique Cadilhac & Louisa Jorm

- Published article on big data requirements and pathways in Australia
- Support and advice on clinical quality indicators for ACS, HF & Stroke
- Support and advice on priority-cross Flagship initiatives



## Implementation & Policy

Co-directed by Professors Garry Jennings AO & Julie Redfern

- Webinar on prevalence of heart valve disease and implementation
- CV Implementation & Policy Roundtable planned for March 2022
- Assessment of initiatives to build implementation capabilities



## Cardio-oncology Webinar Series



Cardio-oncology is an emerging field focusing on the management of cardiovascular health in cancer patients. The Co-chairs of ACvA's Cardio-oncology Working Group, Associate Professors Doan Ngo and Aaron Sverdlow will be hosting this webinar series highlighting how we can potentially improve cardiovascular health outcomes for people living with and beyond cancer through better management and mitigation of cardiotoxicity risk while maintaining effective cancer therapies, emerging diagnostic and risk stratification tools and enhanced models of care.

**Register now** for Part 1 on this Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2021.

## Environmental Determinants of Cardiovascular Health Working Group

This working group was formed to raise awareness of the role the environment plays in CV disease. Chairing the group, Professor Arnagretta Hunter led our Roundtable on 12<sup>th</sup> November which had over 40 attendees representing government, professional associations, academia and clinicians.

There was a lot of constructive feedback regarding the draft framework model which will inform a journal article, a joint-policy document and a call-to-action. We are also in discussion about a possible Global Forum to be held on the topic next year. For further information and the opportunity to contribute to this initiative please contact Dr Meng Ping-Hsu on [meng.hsu@ozheart.org](mailto:meng.hsu@ozheart.org).

## Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD) Working Group

Co-chaired by Professors Belinda Parmenter and Toby Richards, the PAD Working group was established mid-2020. Since then, the PAD Working Group has grown to 27 members including a variety of researchers, clinicians, clinical trial specialists, early career researchers, higher degree research students and consumers. In that time, they've held 5 national meetings, commenced the set-up of a registry to map existing PAD biobank resources in Australia as well as a registry of all PAD clinical trials and cohort studies in Australia.

They have also completed a first draft of a perspective piece on the current state of PAD in Australia including a comprehensive summary of unmet needs and improved the PAD consumer network through the *Join Us* patient registry. Exciting plans for next year include a PAD social media network run through consumers, researchers and clinicians.

## NETWORK AND PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

### Science meets parliament

Science Meets Parliament is a chance for deep engagement between the Australian science and technology sector and decision-makers. Keynote speakers in 2022 include Professor Brian Cox, Nobel Laureates Professor Peter Doherty and Professor Brian Schmidt, Australia's Chief Scientist Dr Cathy Foley, the trailblazing Tanya Hosch and Professor Veena Sahajwalla, MPs, leading scientists,

advocates and STEM professionals.

This is a career-defining professional development opportunity for STEM professionals - a **week-long program** of high quality skills development and training, running from **Monday 28 February - Friday 4 March 2022**.

Delegates will be matched for a meeting with a Member of Parliament in the week 7 - 11 March 2022 (noting: these meetings will be rescheduled if an election is called).

For more information, please see: <https://sta.eventsair.com/science-meets-parliament-2022/>

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

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### The Branco Weiss Fellowship

This Fellowship offers an opportunity for postdocs in all areas of the natural and social sciences and engineering who have conceived an original and independent research idea that falls outside the scope of large-scale research.

Applications CLOSE **15 January 2022**

For more information, please see: <https://brancoweissfellowship.org/who-should-apply.html>

### 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 CLOSE **25 January 2022**

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>

### **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions**

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions are a researcher mobility programme which supports researchers at all stages of their careers, regardless of age and nationality. They are among Europe's most competitive and prestigious awards, aimed at supporting the best and most promising scientists. There are four distinct variations of the award.

Applications CLOSE **1 March 2022**

For more information, please see: <https://scholarships.unimelb.edu.au/awards/marie-sklodowska-curie-actions>

### **Investigator Grants**

Investigator Grants consolidate separate fellowship and research support into one grant scheme that provides the highest-performing researchers at all career stages with funding for their salary (if required) and a significant research support package.

These grants provide the investigator with flexibility to pursue important new research directions as they arise and to form collaborations as needed, rather than being restricted to the scope of a specific research project.

Applications CLOSE **16 March 2022**

For more information, please see: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/find-funding/investigator-grants>