

YOUR FOUNDATION

AUTUMN 2023

FLINDERS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER



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to Friendship

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for supporting
cancer research
and care

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New hope for pancreatic cancer

Researchers at Flinders are on a mission to improve survival rates for patients with one of the deadliest forms of cancer. And their work has received a boost, thanks to your generous support.

Dr Jean Winter and her Flinders University research team will soon begin trials of a world-first blood biomarker test for patients with pancreatic cancer.

The test detects tiny fragments of DNA in the patient's blood and will be used during cancer treatment to see if the tumour is responding to therapy.

This builds on previous work by Flinders University researchers which showed the test is sensitive for detecting bowel cancer, with new evidence indicating it is also sensitive to detecting pancreatic cancer.

Pancreatic cancer has one of the poorest survival rates of all the cancers diagnosed, with only one in 10 patients diagnosed today expected to live beyond five years.

That's a statistic Ross Surace doesn't like to hear.

He lost both his mother and mother-in-law to pancreatic cancer and was diagnosed with the disease himself in 2017. Together with friend Agnes Maddock, also diagnosed in 2017, they now facilitate the South Australian Pancare Support Group for people living with pancreatic cancer, their families and carers.

"I know that I'm one of the fortunate ones in that my cancer was operable," Ross says.

"But I try not to focus on the statistics of pancreatic cancer, and instead focus on facing it with a positive mindset and with hope.

"I have great hopes for research, and while that hope is that there is a cure in the not-too-distant future, research focusing on early detection and treatment is so important for the short-term goals."

Dr Winter's research provides a hopeful alternative to current pancreatic cancer monitoring, which includes



Dr Jean Winter (centre), pictured with pancreatic cancer survivors Agnes Maddock (left) and Ross Surace (right).

invasive, time-consuming, and costly scans to see if the tumour is responding to treatment.

Importantly the biomarker test also has the potential to pick up 'minimal residual disease' – tiny amounts of tumour left over after treatment is completed, which are so small they cannot be detected on scans.

"We hope that by giving patients with pancreatic cancer the option of having a simple but useful blood test to detect their cancer, this will enable the patient and their treating clinician to make more informed decisions about their cancer care,"

Dr Winter says.

"This will not only have the potential to extend the patient's life, but we hope it will also improve their quality of life and give them a sense of reassurance that they are receiving the best care available to them."

Dr Winter's project is one of 31 research projects to share in \$750,000 in funding as part of Flinders Foundation's annual Health Seed Grant Round – made possible thanks to a partnership with Flinders University and the generosity of individuals, organisations and groups in our community.

Thank you!



Laughter Care performers Barry and Derek (pictured left and right) brought some cheer to patient Carla – with the trio singing a rousing rendition of Que Sera Sera together.

Laughter really is the best medicine

An Australian-first pilot program at Flinders Medical Centre is brightening up hospital stays for elderly patients – many of whom have dementia.

Thanks to the generosity of Flinders Foundation supporters, and a CommBank Staff Foundation Community Grant, The Humour Foundation's Laughter Care performers have visited the hospital's Geriatric Evaluation and Management (GEM) ward twice a week for the past year to sing, chat and reminisce with patients.

And in wonderful news, the Laughter Care program has now been extended thanks to you!

Southern Adelaide Local Health Network GEM Ward Acting Allied Health Service Manager, Fabiola Jabur, said reactions from patients during the interactions have been "amazing".

"A hospital admission can really impact on a patient's mood, particularly with elderly patients," Fabiola said.

When we see them talking, interacting and singing together, you can see their faces brighten up immediately.

Fabiola Jabur

"It has also given patients something to look forward to and they'll often make requests for specific songs on the next visit," Fabiola said.

Reminiscence and humour therapies have been found to improve the quality of life for older people living with dementia or experiencing social isolation, while also decreasing agitation levels and behavioural disturbances, and creating a positive atmosphere for patients and their families.

Staff have also noticed Laughter Care performers encouraging connection and interaction between patients sharing a room, which has helped overcome isolation and boredom.

Run by Australian charity, The Humour Foundation, this is the first time the Laughter Care program has operated with elderly patients inside an Australian hospital, with programs already established in residential aged care homes interstate.



Thank you for supporting babies, kids and families at Flinders

“My family and I will remain eternally grateful for the care my baby received during our time in the Flinders Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). My baby made quite a dramatic entry into this world at only 23 weeks and chances of his survival were minimal. The little miracle is thriving today and when I reflect back at our time in the unit, the support, a kind word here and there, encouragement and an occasional hug from the staff gave us hope. We have nothing to offer except gratitude. They made the journey bearable. We made it through with massive support and professional care. Thank you.” Serah, mum of Jediah (Pictured)

Flinders Medical Centre cares for thousands of sick and vulnerable babies and children each year across the Neonatal Unit, Children’s Ward, Emergency Department, Child Protection Service and many other areas, services and programs.

Thank you for helping to make a difference to children’s lives by providing the best possible care, when children and families need it most.

To mark World Prematurity Day, families with babies cared for by the Neonatal Unit at Flinders Medical Centre sent in messages of gratitude and hope, highlighting the amazing, highly-trained medical and nursing staff who are committed to giving sick and premature babies the best start in life.

Here are some of the messages

“To the special doctors, nurses and staff, thank you for taking care of my lovely daughter, who is completing year 12 and hopes to join the medical profession. Without your care my heart would be hollow.”

“We think and speak of you often and reflect on the journey you supported us on during our 100 odd days in NICU. Our son is now four and is healthy, happy and cheeky! Thank you for all that you do.”

From life-saving equipment for the sickest babies to support for anxious parents, you can help provide comfort and reduce stress for families of premature babies by making a donation to Flinders Foundation.

Speak with our team about how we can work together to support babies and families at Flinders.



‘Sound Ears’ protect little ears

New noise monitoring devices in the Flinders Medical Centre (FMC) Neonatal Unit are helping the tiniest babies to get more restful and peaceful sleep.

Your donations have enabled the installation of ‘Sound Ears’ – wall mounted noise meters which display the level of noise in the room.

Featuring a large ear, the meters light up green, yellow or red as the noise level increases.

FMC Neonatal Unit Associate Nurse Unit Manager Jacquie Glazbrook says the Neonatal Unit can be a noisy place, but the monitoring system is helping to make it a calmer environment for babies.

“Naturally, there’s a lot of equipment buzzing and beeping in the unit, and staff communicating with one another...but little babies are so sensitive to sound,” Jacquie says.

“They should still be in mum’s tummy where it’s quiet and protected, so we want to try and mimic those conditions as much as possible here in the unit, and that means a safe, calm, quiet environment with reduced external stimulation.”

Since installing the Sound Ears staff have noticed how loud some equipment is and have changed their practice to include earmuff protection for babies near that equipment.

A quick glance at the Sound Ears is helping us all realise if we, or the environment, are a little too loud, and think about what we can do to reduce that noise and help the babies to rest and recuperate. Jacquie Glazbrook



Young patient Django (pictured) was among the first to try out some of the projector’s games.

Fun and games at Flinders

Flinders’ young patients now have a welcome distraction from medical appointments thanks to a new interactive projector gaming console.

A generous grant to Flinders Foundation from children’s charity Cops for Kids purchased the projector for the Paediatric Outpatient Clinic waiting room at Flinders Medical Centre.

Fitted to the ceiling, it projects games onto the floor and is suitable for all ages, with games to suit crawling babies, through to more advanced games like ice hockey for older children.

“The gaming console has been a game-changer,” explains Maddie Stanborough, Paediatric Unit Acting Nurse Unit Manager.

“The paediatric clinics at Flinders are incredibly busy and we see children of all ages, often with complex medical issues which take time for our specialists to carefully assess.”

“Families regularly spend time in the waiting area during their visits and, as all parents know, it can be challenging to keep children entertained especially in a hospital environment.”

“The gaming console is contact-free and is a great way of keeping kids entertained in a safe way.”



Chloë (left) and Jude (right) during treatment.



From cancer to friendship

In August 2019, Chloë Lamont and her husband Kyle left their home in New Zealand and arrived in Adelaide to embark on a new adventure. Just six weeks later, shortly after her 30th birthday, Chloë was diagnosed with breast cancer. Around the same time, 34-year-old Jude McArthur was dealing with a similar diagnosis.

Both young women were referred to Flinders for a whirlwind of appointments, tests and treatments. They were forced to confront issues they had never thought about, like fertility and mastectomy.

Jude and Chloë began treatment at Flinders within weeks of one another.

One day when Chloë was sitting in the Flinders Centre for Innovation in Cancer (FCIC), she saw a young woman impeccably dressed and wearing a head scarf.

"When you're in an oncology suite, you're the youngest person by 50 years which is scary. To see this beautiful young woman walk in was bit of relief like, she can do it, so I can do it too," says Chloë.

"The only silver lining to having cancer was meeting Jude and our support team."

Out of the worst experience in their lives, Jude and Chloë have developed a beautiful friendship and helped their Facebook support group grow from fewer than 10 members to more than 100.

They are now both in remission and grateful for the care they received at Flinders.

But there is the knowledge that their cancer could return at any time.

"We all have this fear of reoccurrence – the 'scanxiety' when we have to get scans," says Jude.

"Research into breast cancer and all types of cancer is so important. Even in the short time that Chloë and I went through treatment, there were advances."

"With more research, I'm hoping that – if I am re-diagnosed with cancer – by then it won't be a death sentence."

Chloe and Jude bravely shared their stories, fears and hopes at Flinders Foundation's Pink Yellow Blue Ball raising funds for cancer research and care at Flinders. The crowd were clearly inspired by their courage – raising \$130,000 to support new cancer research projects and patient care initiatives at Flinders.

Thank you for supporting breast cancer services at Flinders

Your support is helping to provide a dedicated space in the Breast and Endocrine Clinic at Flinders Medical Centre to give additional support for the ever-increasing number of women and men diagnosed with breast cancer.

In Australia there are, on average, 57 people diagnosed with breast cancer every day.

The breast clinic at Flinders sees around 7,000 patients each year, including 643 breast surgeries and 237 new breast cancer diagnosis in the last year.

Breast and Endocrine Advanced Nurse Consultant, Amanda Jones, says the new space will provide a private area for care, support and education.

The breast nurses will be able to utilise this space for clinical care, as well as provide education and answer questions about breast cancer, surgery and related treatments. We can also assist with organising timely referrals and offer vital psychosocial support to our patients. Amanda Jones

Thank you

for your support of this vital service.



ICU Staff Kathrine De Lyster and Bridget Dowding pictured with grateful patient Tony de Maaijer (centre).

Grateful Tony gives back

Struggling to get a breath in and feeling like he was “choking to death”, Tony de Maaijer knew he was in a bad way.

“I couldn’t sleep all night and became really unwell, my lungs had given out and I knew I had to do something quickly,” Tony recalls.

Fortunately, Tony ended up *“in the hands of the most marvellous professionals”* - in the Flinders Medical Centre Intensive Care Unit (ICU), where he spent 10 days.

“There were so many people in there who looked after me, and the care I received was amazing,” Tony says.

“All these beautiful people left an impression on me and I wanted to say thank you, and to do something that would benefit the hardworking staff directly.”

In a show of thanks, Tony recently returned to Flinders, making a generous donation of \$10,000 to help provide recliners, massage chairs, a coffee machine, and other comforts for the staff in the unit.

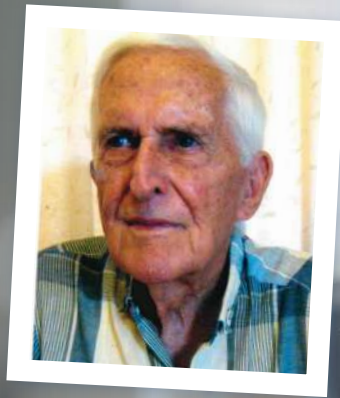
ICU nurse Emma Dunstan said Tony’s visit to the unit gave staff a “boost”.

“We’re grateful to Tony for recognising the staff in ICU, particularly during such a challenging time in healthcare,” Emma said.

“In the work we do, we don’t often see our patients again after they leave the ward, so to see a patient like Tony standing up, feeling better and recovered after all they’ve been through is really nice.”

Pleasingly Tony has recovered and is feeling well – busily working, enjoying exercise, games of table tennis and looking after his young grandchildren.

Ralph's legacy tackles prostate and bladder cancers



Dr Luke Grundy and Ralph Ernst (inset photo).



A generous man's chance encounter with Flinders Medical Centre 35 years ago is now helping to change the future for men with prostate and bladder cancers.

Ralph Ernst was diagnosed with bladder cancer in 1988 while travelling around Australia with wife Pixie.

Operated on and cared for by the urology service at Flinders, Ralph and Pixie never forgot the care they received and were passionate about supporting men with similar cancers until their passings in 2020 and 2021, respectively.

Together, Ralph and Pixie left a generous gift to Flinders Foundation, to support research into men's cancers for many years to come.

This legacy now lives on in the Ralph Ernst Fellowship which has been awarded to Flinders University researcher Dr Luke Grundy, whose research is focused on preventing side effects arising from treatment for prostate and bladder cancers.

This work, Dr Grundy says, is about *"making cancer treatment more effective and improving quality of life"*.

"There's a common misconception that after you survive cancer you just return back to your old life. But in reality, life-saving cancer treatments commonly cause severe side effects that significantly impact your quality of life going forwards," Dr Grundy says.

With the dramatic improvements in early diagnosis and treatments for many cancers, attitudes are now shifting to focus not just on surviving cancer, but ensuring that patients living beyond cancer are not burdened by the consequences of their treatment.

Dr Luke Grundy

Up to 30 per cent of men who undergo chemotherapy, radiotherapy and immunotherapy to treat bladder or prostate cancer will develop acute bladder pain and a severely overactive bladder, with around 10 per cent of them developing bladder pain so debilitating that cancer treatment must be prematurely stopped, *"dramatically worsening"* patient outcomes.

Dr Grundy will look to lower these rates, by investigating use of prophylactic treatments (preventative medicines) to prevent off-target bladder inflammation during radiotherapy for prostate cancer.

His work will also investigate whether nerve blocking agents – including targeted local anaesthetics and nerve blocking peptides – could be used to prevent bladder pain developing in patients treated for bladder cancer.

"I'd like for the 'new norm' to not just be about surviving, but thriving after cancer," Dr Grundy says.

Leaving a gift in your Will can leave a lasting mark on research and patient care initiatives, which benefits generations to come. Speak to the Flinders Foundation team for more information on leaving a gift in Will.