

YOUR FOUNDATION

SPRING 2021

FLINDERS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER



Thank You

for supporting the wonderful men in our community during Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

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Ralph Ernst 1929-2020

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Grateful Ollie's neonatal journey

Little Oliver Slade was born at only 25 weeks weighing just 535 grams.

He spent 140 days in the Flinders Medical Centre (FMC) Neonatal Unit where he experienced numerous complications. It was quite the journey for brave Oliver and parents Rhiannon and Andrew.



Newborn Ollie in the Neonatal Unit

"There was often a new complication, and phone calls at 3am when he was very sick," recalls Rhiannon. *"In the early days we were told that we just needed to celebrate Oliver getting through each hour. It was a stressful and anxious time.*

"But he was in the very best hands; he was in the place he needed to be."

Now 18 months old, Oliver has ongoing health conditions and receives therapy for the complications resulting from his prematurity. But despite this, he is loving being home surrounded by his family.

"He just loves life and he's so happy – every week he's doing something new," Rhiannon says.

The staff were an incredible support for us and so good at explaining everything that was going on with Ollie. Visitors weren't allowed in the unit due to the COVID-19 restrictions, so they were our constant company and became like family Rhiannon Slade, Oliver's Mum

In a show of thanks to the Neonatal Unit, the Slade family recently raised \$1,060 by asking for donations in lieu of gifts at Ollie's first birthday party – with several neonatal staff also joining the celebration.

Rhiannon will also take part in the City-Bay later this year, raising funds to bring a Neurally Adjusted Ventilatory Assist (NAVA) device to Flinders.

"I am so thankful for everything we received for Oliver and am now passionate about giving back and helping other families and their babies to have a better chance of survival," Rhiannon says.

What is

A NAVA machine?

A NAVA is a mechanical ventilator that synchronises with a baby's breathing, but still provides them with extra breathing support when they get tired.

(picture is for illustration purposes only)



Join the team!

Join Rhiannon in the City-Bay team to help raise funds for a NAVA by registering at www.bit.ly/PBcitybay or scan the QR code



You're helping kids with glaucoma

Eight-year-old Elizabeth loves arts and crafts, drawing, playing with friends and spending time on her family's farm.



She's also one of a small number of children treated at Flinders Medical Centre for childhood glaucoma – a rare condition caused by pressure on the optic nerve.

Diagnosed shortly after her third birthday with inflammatory eye disease Uveitis, Elizabeth developed glaucoma, leaving her legally blind by age six.

"It was pretty confronting initially but doctors were able to get on top of (the infection) quite easily with treatment, so it wasn't affecting her vision," mum Alisha recalls.

***"But further down the track it wasn't responsive to medication and her vision became extremely poor. I think she had 14 general anaesthetics for various eye procedures within two-and-a-half years,"* says Alisha.**

With specialist treatment, and plenty of hard work from Elizabeth to rehabilitate her eyesight, her vision is currently the best it has been in years.

Now, thanks to generous supporters like you, researchers are hoping to improve the lives of children with glaucoma by identifying genes which lead to more severe outcomes, while also focusing on methods to improve quality of life for patients, and their families.

Paediatric Orthoptist, Lachlan Knight (pictured inset), has received a Flinders Foundation top-up PhD scholarship to study 300 cases of childhood glaucoma in Australia and New Zealand.

"Childhood glaucoma is largely considered to be a genetic condition, yet we've found a 'genetic answer' for only around 40 per cent of patients," Lachlan explains.

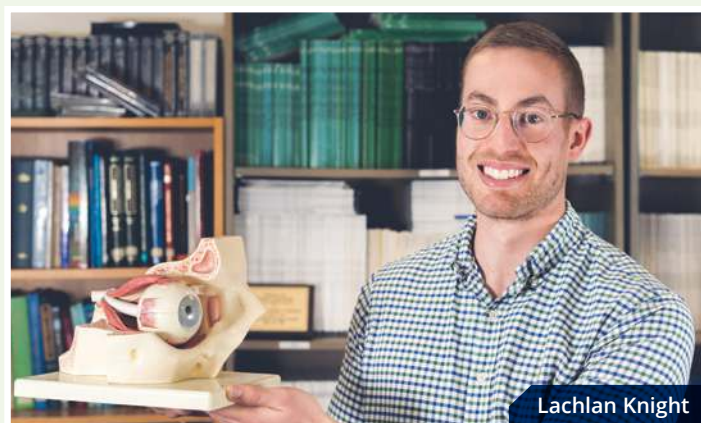
"This project is really looking at how many children are affected by the condition, what genes cause it, and if some genes cause more severe disease or have a greater impact on vision."

Lachlan's work is also the first project in Australia, and one of just a few worldwide, to investigate the quality of life of kids with glaucoma and their families.

"Childhood glaucoma is a chronic condition needing life-long follow up," Lachlan says. *"Some patients have vision loss and can have learning difficulties and social problems which stem from it. There can also be feelings of isolation and being misunderstood because there is a lack of awareness of the disease."*

"For parents, they talk about stress, strong emotions and strain on the family, because many worry constantly for their child and what the future looks like for them."

"Some of these stories are quite heartbreaking, so this work is really looking at how families cope, what help they need, and how we can get them necessary support."



To support vital health and medical research like this, please donate today. Simply fill out the enclosed donation form and return in the envelope provided. Thank you.

Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, a time when your support can make a difference to the wonderful men in your life.

Prostate cancer is the most common non-skin cancer of men in Australia, and around the world. It is a big health problem and there's no other cancer in men that comes close.

Australian Prostate Cancer Facts

Almost 100,000 men are living with prostate cancer

There are almost 17,000 new diagnoses each year

More than 3,000 men die of prostate cancer each year

The gift that keeps giving

Ralph Ernst, a patient at Flinders more than three decades ago, has left a long-lasting legacy to help researchers develop new treatments for men with incurable, metastatic prostate cancer.

Diagnosed with bladder cancer in 1988 while travelling around Australia with wife Pixie, Ralph was operated on and cared for by the urology service at Flinders.

Ralph remained indebted for the care he received at Flinders and passionate about supporting men with similar cancers, including prostate cancer, until his passing in 2020.

Ralph and Pixie left a generous gift to Flinders Foundation which will

support research into men's cancers for many years to come.

The most recent project will look at therapy resistance, through a scholarship offered to PhD student Sam Rollin, awarded for the first time in 2021.

Read on for more information about the difference Sam hopes to make in this space.



How can you leave a legacy?

If you would like to learn more about supporting cancer researchers in their discovery for better treatments, and ultimately a cure, as part of your legacy, please contact Rebekah on (08) 8204 5216.

Ralph's gift – the Ralph Ernst PhD Scholarship in Prostate Cancer Research

Sam Rollin, recipient of the inaugural Ralph Ernst PhD Scholarship in Prostate Cancer Research, says Ralph and Pixie's generosity is providing him with the opportunity to make an incredible difference.

"I'm so grateful to Ralph and Pixie for the chance to work with Associate Professor Luke Selth and his team because it's allowing me to play my part researching this devastating disease so we can improve outcomes for patients facing the poorest prognoses," says Sam (pictured right).

Under Associate Professor Selth's leadership (pictured left), the team are focused on understanding how prostate cancer becomes resistant to Androgen Deprivation Therapy – the current frontline hormone therapy treatment for men with metastatic prostate cancer.

"Most patients get some benefit from this treatment, but the side effects can be nasty," Associate Professor Selth explains.

"Unfortunately, once tumours become resistant to this therapy, the cancer is incurable and can rapidly progress.

"If we want to eventually cure men with metastatic prostate cancer, then the current therapies aren't going to do it, so our work is really focused on developing new therapies with fewer side effects."

One of these therapies focuses on manipulating the androgen receptor – the major driver of prostate cancer cell growth – to potentially make prostate tumours more sensitive to immunotherapy treatment.

For more information about this research, visit:

flindersfoundation.org.au/samphd



What is Immunotherapy?

Immunotherapy works by boosting a person's own immune system to fight cancer. Currently, it is most often used to treat melanoma, lung, kidney and head and neck cancers.

Most research focuses on depriving the androgen receptor of androgen, but we're looking at doing the opposite and activating the androgen receptor using smarter hormonal therapies in a way that can reduce tumour growth.

Sam Rollin

Thank You

Your generous gift today will support vital research into prostate cancer and men's health, helping the wonderful men in our community live a longer and healthier life.

Dean and Angie's prostate cancer mission!

Having recently recovered from back surgery, Dean Dimmock, 48, couldn't have imagined the news he was about to receive after visiting his doctor about new back pain.

He had just returned home when the phone rang.

"I literally had the front door key in my hand when I answered the phone," says Dean. "The surgeon said, 'Dean, your back is fine, you don't need more surgery. But you have secondary cancer everywhere mate. It's in your pelvis. It's something quite nasty. You need to go and get it looked at, quick.'"

Soon after, Dean was diagnosed with stage 4 metastatic prostate cancer.

I couldn't quite process in my own mind that this was happening to me. I always thought this was an 'old man's' disease, and here I was only 48 with it.

Dean endured countless tests and was eventually placed on a trial medication, which he remains on. Despite treatment, he suffers from chronic and debilitating pain, describing it as *"a crushing bone pain that creeps through your body, like somebody going from toe to head with a steamroller."*

Dean and his wife Angie haven't let the diagnosis dampen their spirit. In fact, it has spurred them, and a group of committed friends, on to raise money in support of prostate cancer research, by running marathons, organising food festivals and other fundraising events.

So far, the group have raised over \$32,500, all of which has been directed to prostate cancer research and equipment to help men just like Dean. Most recently, their efforts



Dean and Angie Dimmock

helped purchase an incubator for prostate cancer researcher Associate Professor Luke Selth's lab.

This essential piece of equipment replicates the environment in the human body to grow cancer cells and tissue. With adjustable conditions, it allows you to see how tumours react in different situations.

Associate Professor Selth was incredibly grateful for the much-needed equipment, which will be used for at least eight different prostate cancer research projects currently underway.

"This incubator will be used for everything we do, and with funding being so tight these days, people like Angie and Dean are so important to keep labs like ours going," Associate Professor Selth said.

Associate Professor Selth has even joined the group's running and fundraising events! *"For men like Dean, diagnosed with metastatic prostate cancer, the prognosis is often poor,"* says Associate Professor Selth.

"But despite this, and having a lot on their plate, Angie, Dean and their friends are always putting so much time and effort in to supporting our work."

"I want someone to find a cure for this," says Angie. *"I want Dean well and I want it gone. So, wherever I can raise some money, I will do it. That's my contribution and my way of making some sense of it."*

Your generous gift today will support vital research into prostate cancer and men's health, providing hope for men like Dean. Thank you.

Men's health and wellbeing receives a boost

Research focusing on male health and wellbeing has received a considerable boost, with Flinders University and Flinders Foundation joining the Freemasons Centre for Male Health and Wellbeing.



During Men's Health Week earlier this year, nine Flinders University research projects received funding from this newly expanded male health research alliance, across prostate cancer, Aboriginal health and mental health.

Among them was Professor Murray Drummond (pictured), whose research will seek to improve the mental health of young Indigenous and non-Indigenous males in South Australia and the Northern Territory. He will focus on the role of sporting clubs as "safe spaces" to promote mental health and wellbeing.

"Sport remains a significant rite of passage for males in Australian society," Professor Drummond explained. "If we can make these often 'masculinised' sporting spaces, a space for men to feel comfortable about addressing any health issues they have, then that's going to provide them with such important support."

"The mental health and wellbeing of young males in particular is not being adequately addressed. They have a significant risk of self-harm and suicide, while those who identify as Indigenous and LGBTIQ are at even greater risk," Professor Drummond said.

"It's wonderful the Centre is mirroring the cultural shift in society and taking a holistic approach to men's health by looking at every facet of health and wellbeing and how that can be improved - including mental, emotional and physical health."

The Freemasons Centre for Male Health and Wellbeing is a research alliance involving the Masonic Charities Trust (the charitable arm of Freemasons SA/NT), the University of Adelaide, Flinders University, Flinders Foundation and SAHMRI, and Menzies School of Health Research in the Northern Territory.

The initiative shown by the Freemasons Centre for Male Health and Wellbeing will bring additional weight to our efforts to address some of the leading causes of male ill health, including prostate cancer and mental health, with a particular focus on health and wellbeing for Indigenous men

Flinders University Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Robert Saint (pictured).



To learn more about the newly funded projects at Flinders University as part of Freemasons Centre for Male Health and Wellbeing, visit: flindersfoundation.org.au/freemasoncentre



Thank You for helping GPs manage insomnia

Flinders University researchers will soon develop a world-first pathway to help GPs treat insomnia, in the hope of reducing reliance on sleeping pills for the estimated 2.5 million Australian adults who suffer with chronic insomnia.

With the help of a Flinders Foundation Health Seed Grant, Dr Alexander Sweetman will develop the pathway to help GPs identify and refer patients to a specialised digital Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) program for insomnia.

CBT works by targeting the underlying psychological, physiological and behavioural causes of insomnia, as opposed to medications which only mask the surfacing symptom temporarily.

"It has been difficult to administer CBT in general practice because session-based programs are too time consuming, costly and inconvenient for overburdened GPs and patients," Dr Sweetman explains.

"Consequently, 90 per cent of insomnia patients managed by Australian GPs are prescribed (sleeping pills)."

However, face-to-face CBT programs have recently been translated into an effective self-administered digital program called Sleepio, which has been shown to improve sleep and reduce the need for sleeping pills.



Dr Alexander Sweetman

This project will directly improve the sleep, health, and quality of life of individuals participating in the study and contribute to gradually changing the way that insomnia is managed in general practice throughout Australia.

Dr Alexander Sweetman

Your continued support will help clinicians like Dr Sweetman in creating healthier and happier lives for you and your loved ones. Thank you.

What is

a Flinders Foundation Health Seed Grant?

In partnership with Flinders University, along with generous support from donors, fundraisers and corporate partners, seed grants of up to \$25,000 each are offered to help researchers kick-start discoveries across a variety of illnesses, diseases and social issues. **Recipients for 2021 will be announced soon!**