

YOUR FOUNDATION

SUMMER 2022

FLINDERS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER



Thank You

for supporting our
Flinders Heroes

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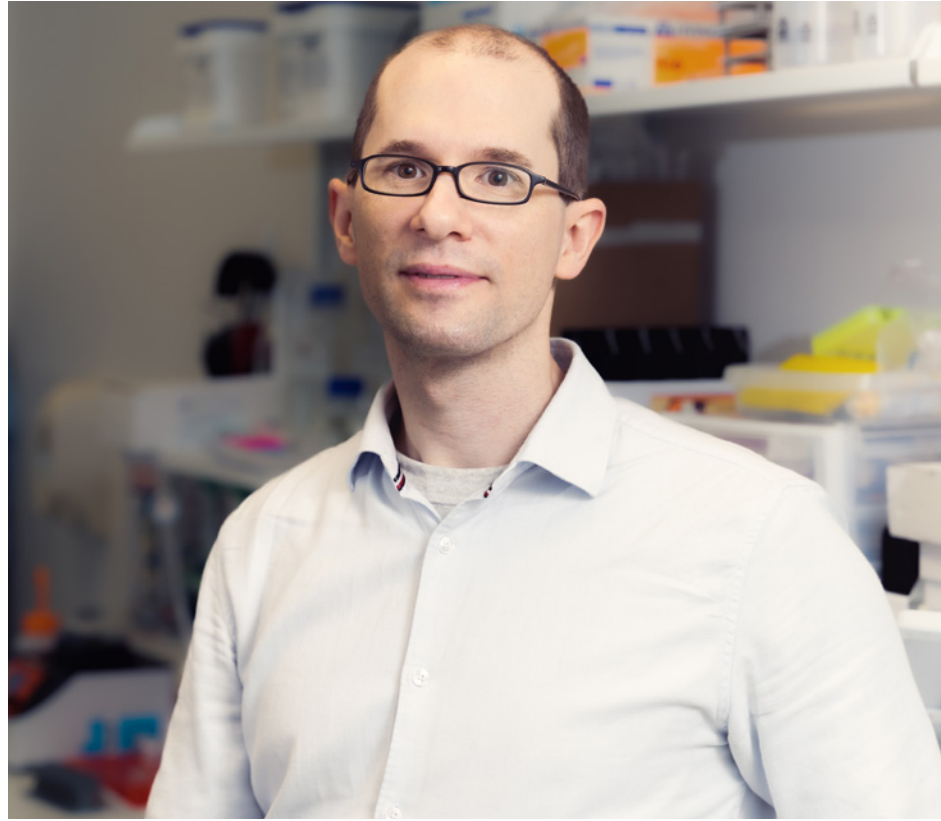
We asked for your help,
and you delivered
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SHINING A LIGHT ON DEMENTIA

The number of Australians with dementia is projected to increase with more people living longer. **Your support is giving hope to people affected by dementia,** and their families, through groundbreaking research, and improved patient care.

Understanding how memory works

New research at Flinders University is seeking to understand how memory works – and how it is lost – in the hope of making new discoveries into dementia and Alzheimer's disease.



Dr Arne Ittner and his team recently arrived at Flinders, establishing a laboratory for molecular dementia and memory research, and Flinders Foundation has committed to four years of funding to help bring this additional research strength to Adelaide.

Dr Ittner and his research colleagues have also received two grants to grow their research focusing on how certain molecules contribute to memory. They hope to define how memory is lost and, in turn, interfere in that process.

Dr Ittner's research grants have been generously funded by Flinders Foundation thanks to a grant from the McCusker Foundation along with an individual supporter with

The difficult part with memory is that we don't understand how molecules build memory – it's a complex process.

an interest in dementia research, who has closely followed the research team's work over a number of years.

"Our team is taking a unique approach to it in the hope that we can solve part of the puzzle of memory function in the brain," Dr Ittner explains.

"When we look at other diseases, like cancer for example, there have been advancements in treatment because you can quantify cancer cells.

"But when it comes to dementia, how do you count memory? That's a real challenge."

Dr Ittner said his team's aim was to contribute to an effective diagnosis and treatment for dementia, including the most common form – Alzheimer's disease.

"There are experiments from 60 years ago that laid the foundations of how memory might work in the brain – but all these years later we still haven't worked out the details," he says.

"We want to find a therapy that improves the lives of patients and also their families, because a big burden of dementia is on families and carers – it's not easy on them."

You've helped bring a smile to the face of people with dementia

Dianne Evans was one of the first patients to enjoy the new mobile sensory projector equipment that are providing support to patients with dementia and cognitive impairment at Flinders Medical Centre and Noarlunga Hospital.

Dianne's husband Brian said playing games on the projector brought a smile to Dianne's face.

"Dianne was having so much fun, we basically had to drag her away from the projector at the end!" Brian said.

Funded thanks to your generous support, and the Flinders Medical Centre Volunteer Service, the mobile sensory projector units are programmed with more than 100 games, music and social activities which respond to gestures and movements from users.

Patients can take a quiz, burst balloons with their hands, and experience scenes and sounds from nature while the images are projected onto any surface including floors, walls, ceilings, and tables. This means patients can experience the benefits in a shared area, or from the convenience of their room.

Geriatric Evaluation and Management Acting Allied Health Manager, Catherine Ames, said including patients in regular activities involving movement, communication and mental engagement contributed to an overall better quality of life.



Dianne Evans enjoying the new mobile sensory projector at Flinders Medical Centre with Geriatric Evaluation and Management Unit Occupational Therapist Michelle Hewavasam.

"Using the sensory projector gets patients engaged in a meaningful activity and decreases boredom throughout their hospital journey," Catherine said.

"It also encourages interaction and socialisation between patients and staff. We can personalise the experience for the patient by uploading a photo of themselves, their home or maybe a place that was special to them growing up. These can be great conversation starters."

"I think the projector is such a wonderful idea," Brian says. *"It gets the patients up and doing something fun and physical."*

Thank you for helping to bring this technology to Flinders and Noarlunga so patients with dementia and other cognitive impairments can experience physical and emotional benefits.

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We asked for your help, and you delivered... Thank You



Concept images courtesy of Cheesman Architects.

Thanks to your generous support of our recent appeal, a new child protection space at Flinders is starting to take shape!

The new welcoming space will be built to meet the specific needs of children, and their families. It will be a safe place, where vulnerable children can work with the wonderful Child Protection Services (CPS) team and take the next steps on their journey to healing.

"The redevelopment of the CPS at Flinders will make a massive difference in how we can care for children," said Meredith, a Paediatrician with CPS at Flinders.

"Unfortunately, many of the children we see have undergone significant challenges and traumas in their life and coming to child protection is just another hard thing they have to do in their day.

"The new space will be a place where they feel comfortable and can be looked after, be with the adults that are important to them, in an environment which is also fun."

It will also better support the CPS staff, some of whom have been part of this dedicated team for 30 years, allowing them to provide the highest level of care to children who need their help the most.

"The new space will enable the CPS team to do our job better. Hopefully, this means children leave feeling like it was a safe place to be, and that they have been well looked after," Meredith said.

Thank you for helping to bring this vision to life. We look forward to sharing updates with you as the new child protection space at Flinders progresses.



"Sometimes, the children we see are so traumatised, worried and anxious that even for a medical appointment, it's hard for them to come inside the medical facility and be examined or talk to us about things that have happened in the past.

"If the environment is more child friendly and relaxed, we can take away some of these anxieties.

"We can't change much about what has already happened, but we can try and make sure that their visits to Child Protection Services don't add further stress." - Aabha, Paediatrician

Your support has helped turn stressful situations for kids into a little bit of fun!

The Paediatric Emergency Department (ED) is a busy place where children, their families and staff are regularly faced with stressful situations.

Thanks to your support, families visiting the Flinders Paediatric ED are now being met by a more welcoming, child-friendly environment.

Research suggests that visual art within clinical environments, and in particular artwork representing nature and landscapes, can be beneficial in a patient's mental and physical rehabilitation.

To improve the patient and staff

experience and reduce stress on children and families, the Paediatric ED has been re-decorated with bright and colourful artwork. Visitors walk into an underwater adventure, with graphics of South Australian marine life on the walls and windows.

Paediatric ED Acting Nurse Unit Manager Megan Eastaughffe said children, families and staff were all enjoying the new artwork.

"The graphics are fantastic. The way they have been designed means they add colour and interest, and a feeling of calm," Megan said.

"I have been able to use the graphics for distraction from procedures, or while Mum or Dad needs to run to the bathroom! We play games with children – can you find the dolphin?"

"Where is the shark? What is this creature called?"

The graphics have been valuable for making the area less intimidating, procedures more tolerable and, overall, a more pleasant experience for everyone.

The graphic artwork was co-designed by Cheesman Architects, Elevation Design and Kaurna artist and creative advisor, Karl Telfer.

Thank you for your continued support to improve the hospital experience for children and families.



Above images by Tom Roschi Photography

“The ICCU staff are the reason I am alive”

Intensive Critical Care Unit patient, Laura



Laura doesn't remember her life being saved by the staff in the Intensive Critical Care Unit (ICCU), but she will never forget the amazing care and compassion they showed her and her family.

Laura was admitted to the ICCU in July following an accident, where she sustained serious injuries. She was in a coma for 17 days.

“The ICCU staff are the reason I am alive,” said Laura. “If they hadn't worked as hard as they did, I wouldn't be here today.”

“They fought for my life when I couldn't fight for myself.”

During her time in ICCU, Laura's family – mum Kylie and dad Robert, step-dad Alistair and brothers Jason, Dylan, Lachlan and Cameron – spent countless hours sitting by her bedside or in the waiting room.

The family got to know all the staff, from the volunteers to the nursing staff, clinicians and the staff who came in to clean.

“Hospitals are busy places, but we never once felt rushed or like the staff didn't have time for us,” Kylie said.

“Their complete and utter devotion – that's the only world I can use, devotion – to Laura and our family was incredible. We were enveloped in this ICCU 'bubble'. They involved us with everything they did. They celebrated with us. They got a bit teary with us. They became like our family.”

“They made an impossible situation bearable and, as a family, we were comforted.”

The support continued when Laura woke up and was finally able to meet the remarkable people who had cared for her.

“They made it so much easier to be in ICCU. I would get upset at times and the staff would sit with me for however long it took for me to feel better and talk me through things,” Laura said.

“If they weren't looking after me at the time, the nurses would come in and see how I was doing. Each time they saw me, they would get so excited because I had improved so much.”

“Seeing how excited they got by my progress made it a better journey.”

Laura spent a total of 34 days in ICCU before being released to the General Ward.

The family wanted to do something to show their appreciation for the team, so Kylie did some asking around to find out what they wanted. Their answer surprised her.

“We were expecting them to ask for a coffee maker, or something for the staff room ... but they came back with a doppler,” Kylie said.

A doppler is a small, but important piece of equipment used to check blood flow.

Kylie got in touch with Flinders Foundation and through the support of family, friends and the local community, the family raised nearly \$4,000 to buy two new dopplers for the ICCU, with surplus funds going towards a refurbishment of the ICCU waiting area.

We were thrilled to facilitate a visit in October for Laura and her family to present the dopplers to the amazing ICCU staff. The team were delighted to be reunited with the family and to see Laura doing so well.

“Most people would leave ICCU and never want to return but I said, ‘No, I'm coming back to visit!’” Laura said.

“When a patient like Laura comes back, you know that you’re making a positive impact.”

Clinical Nurse Karen Hunt



Laura kept her promise and returned to ICCU less than two months after being discharged.

Nearing the end of her rehabilitation, Laura cast aside her wheelchair to walk into the ICCU to see all the staff who took such incredible care of her.

The team, including Clinical Nurse Karen Hunt, were overcome with emotion to see Laura looking so strong and happy.

“When Laura turned up in ICCU and I saw her walking on her own two feet, I was just so happy. She looked beautiful and like a regular young lady, not covered in equipment or hooked up to machines,” Karen said.

“When a patient comes back, you realise that the challenges we face in this job everyday are really worth it. You know that you’re making a positive impact.”

Karen has worked in ICCU at Flinders for nearly 30 years. It’s the patients and the amazing team who keep

Karen motivated to work in such a demanding environment.

“Working in ICCU is stressful, busy and crazy. It’s unpredictable, you never know what the day, or night, will bring,” Karen said.

“We have a great team in ICCU – I am very fortunate to work with incredible people. Our team and our patients are what bring us to work every day.”

Karen said the ICCU staff enjoyed hearing stories from grateful patients like Laura.

“So many times, you just wonder what happens when a person leaves the unit,” she said.

“It’s lovely that patients and their families take the time to send (us thank you notes). It’s quite rewarding when you see or read about a positive outcome, and you know people are genuinely grateful for the care that we have provided.”



Ongoing support continues to save lives!

Do you remember Patricia from 2018?

Her life was saved thanks to an ECMO (Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation) machine, like the one that was funded in part by generous supporters like you.

This machine was used to save Laura’s life, too!

ECMO requires the expertise of specially trained health workers. When Laura’s oxygen saturation levels dropped, the team at Flinders sprang into action to get her onto ECMO and into ICCU.

This is a wonderful example of how your continued support is saving the lives of people in your community.

Thank you!

Can you help?

If you or a loved one have experienced wonderful care at Flinders and would like to find a way to ‘give back’, please contact our team on (08) 8204 5216 or email supporters@flindersfoundation.org.au to discuss your options.



Are worms the key to understanding brains?

Thanks to a generous legacy created by the late Mary Overton, Dr Yee Lian Chew is on the way to finding out!

Like Laura and her family (page 6) whose experience at Flinders inspired them to give back to the wonderful people who cared for them, Ida Mary Overton, a generous donor to the arts and medical research space, left a lasting legacy to Flinders Foundation after her passing in 2002.

Mrs Overton came to be associated with Flinders Medical Centre many years ago when her niece was admitted into the Intensive and Critical Care Unit at Flinders for an emergency procedure.

Thanks to her generosity, the Mary Overton Fellowship was introduced, which has so far seen four fellowships awarded, bringing international neuroscience research experts to Flinders for five-year terms.

Dr Chew was awarded the Fellowship in 2021 for research in neuroscience, using tiny worms to understand how human brains learn, with hopes of helping those with chronic pain and neurodegenerative disorders.

Using Nematodes, one of the smallest worm species, Dr Chew is seeking to understand how the brain learns in one of the simpler forms of animal life – including both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ learning.

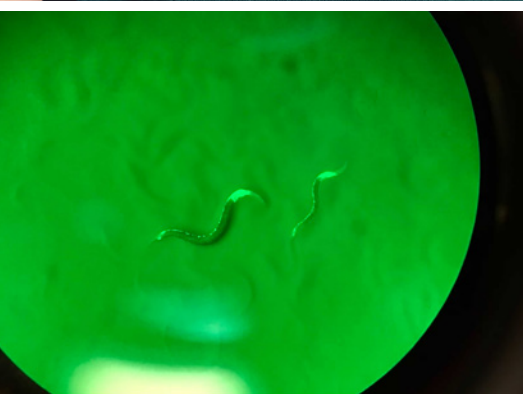
“There are about 100 billion nerve cells in the human brain, but that’s just too big for us to explore in great detail,” Dr Chew explains.

“In contrast, the worm has about 300 neurons, which is few enough that we can name all of them and know exactly how each one is connected to one another.”

“Because we know worms can also learn, we know there must be something pretty fundamental in those 300 neurons so we’re trying to solve what that is.”

By labelling the worm’s neurons with a fluorescent protein, Dr Chew can image their brains, visualise changes, and tag neurons with activity sensors. It’s knowledge she hopes will contribute to a greater understanding of neurodegenerative processes and chronic pain management research in humans.

“This generous support will make such a difference for our project as it gives us funding security and allows us to think further into the future to really work on finding something no one else knows,” Dr Chew says.



Looking down the eyepiece of a microscope, seeing worms with green fluorescence in all neurons (brain cells) crawling on an agar plate.

Including the gift of health and medical research or patient care in your Will is a wonderful way for you to ensure future generations receive the best care.

It takes as little as 1% of your estate and costs you nothing now.

We understand that you family and loved ones come first.

We encourage you to discuss your decision with them to ensure they understand and support your reasons for choosing to support

Flinders Foundation in such a powerful way.

If you would like more information on leaving a gift in your Will, please contact us on (08) 8204 5216 or tick the box on the enclosed donation form and we will contact you for a confidential chat.