

# Priceless



**Clifford  
Craig**  
Medical  
Research Trust

THE NEWS BULLETIN FOR SUPPORTERS OF THE CLIFFORD CRAIG MEDICAL RESEARCH TRUST

## 2012 Medical Research Grants Announced

The important role of the Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust was highlighted at the recent announcement of successful recipients to medical research grants for 2012.

The latest grant round was presented by the Chairman of the Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust, Associate Professor Don McTaggart, at the WD Booth Research Centre at the Launceston General Hospital and included funding for a range of important projects being undertaken by Northern Tasmanian researchers.

Nine new projects will be funded by the Trust in 2012 with the grants totaling \$250,000. Associate Professor McTaggart said the combination of the newly announced grants with the existing research program will see the Trust provide in excess of \$350,000 for medical research in Northern Tasmania next year.

The 2012 grants will allow investigation into a broad range of medical issues which affect our population including thyroid disease, melanoma, anal cancer, post surgery lung infection,

genetic cardiac disease, small bowel lipid deposits, cardiovascular disease and oesophageal adenocarcinoma.

"This announcement sees the Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust building upon our reputation for facilitating an important clinical medical research program across Northern Tasmania which supports our local hospital, clinical school and university researchers" he said.

Associate Professor McTaggart acknowledged and thanked the Trust's supporters and donors for their contribution towards funding the latest round of research.

Detailed description of the nine projects is on page 2.



*Dr Phillip Clarke presenting his melanoma research project at the grant announcement.*

### Choir Sings for Research

The enjoyment of singing and performing was the foundation for a generous donation to medical research in October. The Launceston Male Choir held their annual concert at the City Baptist Church and over 250 people attended the popular afternoon of entertainment.

The choir was formed 76 years ago and President Jack Wivell said the funds raised from the annual concert were donated to a local charity and this years recipient was the Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust.

The philanthropic generosity of the choir is to be congratulated and their generous donation is warmly received.



*Jack Wivall presents Trust Chief Executive Peter Milne with the welcome donation.*

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# Research Update

## Research Projects Awarded

### ***A pilot study to determine the prevalence of thyroid disease, and its association with iron deficiency among Tasmanian pregnant women.***

**Associate Professor Alhossein Khalafallah - \$80,000**

The aim of study is to determine the actual incidence of thyroid disease within the northern Tasmanian obstetric population and its possible association with iron deficiency. This may help clinicians to early screen and diagnose thyroid disease in pregnancy and hence offer the appropriate treatment. Furthermore, it is very important to diagnose early cases with thyroid deficiency in order to avoid any complications for the mother or the baby. There is currently no data regarding the incidence of thyroid disease among the northern Tasmanian antenatal population. The current targeted screening based on clinical examination and history is insufficient to identify the real incidence of thyroid disease in pregnancy. Predictors for thyroid deficiency are usually iodine deficiency and autoimmune disease as well as iron deficiency anaemia, which is prevalent in up to 25% of Tasmanian pregnant women. This project, which will target 500 pregnant women, is a conjoint study between the Launceston General Hospital and the School of Human Life Sciences, University of Tasmania.

### ***Melanoma early detection in a population at high risk of melanoma – The Mole Patrol Study***

**Dr Philip Clarke - \$6,350**

A huge number of skin cancers are removed from Australians each year. Well over 300,000 skin cancers are removed and this is far in excess of the total number of all other cancers combined (about 100,000). In comparison, the next most common cancers are prostate (16,000 each year) and breast (12,000 each year). A relatively small proportion of the population is responsible for the vast bulk of skin cancers. This study will enable very accurate identification and quantification of risk factors for melanoma. High risk people in the general Tasmanian population may then be identified and offered screening so that a potentially deadly cancer can be diagnosed at an early and curable stage. The aim of the study will also help to determine the feasibility of whole of population screening for melanoma, which would be a world first.

### ***Lung Infection Post Surgery (Major Abdominal): Pre-Operative Physiotherapy***

**Ms Ianthe Boden – Cardio respiratory Specialist Physiotherapist - \$61,201**

Chest infections can occur in as many as 1 out of every 2 patients after they have had major bowel, stomach, liver or kidney surgery. This is serious and costly. Chest infections dramatically increase the risk of death following surgery, and the average length of time

spent in hospital is doubled. Studies have shown that getting up, and out of bed, and walking as early as possible after surgery with a Physiotherapist reduces this chance of getting a chest infection down to as low as 1 in 20. Unfortunately, these studies have also included time spent with a Physiotherapist before the operation on learning how to do breathing exercises and how to get going again soon after the operation. So, it is really hard to say for certain if this significant reduction in chest infections is down, not just to the amount of walking a patient does after the operation, but also to the level of education they received before the operation. No clinical trial to this point has specifically looked at how effective this type of pre-operative education is, in its own right, in reducing the risk of a chest infection after an operation.

The LIPSMack trial will provide education and training from a Physiotherapist to half of the patients about to undergo major abdominal surgery. The other half will get just get a pamphlet covering the same sort of information. All patients will get a thorough and standardised early walking program following their surgery. The trial will compare these two groups and see if there is any difference in rates of chest infections and how long they stay in hospital. The result of this trial will assist in determining the wisest and most cost effective way to allocate Physiotherapy services to people having a major abdominal operation and assist them in recovering from their operation as quickly as possible.

### ***Knowledge and Perceptions of Genetic Cardiac Diseases***

**Dr Kathryn Ogden and Ms Jessica Kawa BMedSc(Hons) - \$2,735**

Genetic heart conditions are common in our community; however, not all patients fully understand what their condition means and what impact it can have on their family. This project is designed to investigate the knowledge possessed by final year medical students and medical professionals about genetic cardiac conditions and how these conditions are perceived, plus the perception by patients and their knowledge about the condition. The study will survey Tasmanian medical students, medical professionals (both GPs and cardiologists), and patients with genetic heart conditions who are enrolled on the Tasmanian Branch of the National Genetic Heart Disease Registry to ascertain their knowledge about genetic heart conditions and where they would turn to further information, and what services are available for support. In addition, it is proposed to also personally interview patients with genetic heart conditions to further understand what importance they place on being educated about their condition, whether they have shared this knowledge with their families. We hope that the project may give an indication if and where patient education and quality of care may need to be improved, and to provide evidence of what other skills we may need to equip our future doctors with to maintain high quality of care standards when dealing with these patients.



# Clifford Craig Funding in 2011

## ***Resistance to macrolide and fluoroquinolone antibiotics in Haemophilus influenzae.***

***Dr Stephen Tristram - \$8,000***

Antibiotic resistance is increasing worldwide and the issue has recently received significant attention by the global and national healthcare establishment. In February, Australia's peak microbiology and infectious disease bodies held a national antibiotic resistance summit in Sydney, with a goal of establishing recommendations on combating antibiotic resistance, to present to the Government. One of the recommendations was for continual surveillance studies to monitor the emergence of new types of antibiotic resistance. Furthermore, in April, for World Health Day 2011, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched a worldwide campaign on antimicrobial resistance and its global spread, in an effort to safeguard antibiotics for future generations. The most common presenting illnesses for which doctors prescribe antibiotics in Australia are respiratory tract infections, and significant resistance to antibiotics traditionally used in these situations has led to increasing use of newer alternative antibiotics. It is important to establish the current levels of resistance to these new antibiotics so that surveillance studies can be undertaken to monitor for increasing resistance that might compromise treatment and negatively impact on patients.

## ***Etiologic role of Human papilloma virus (HPV) infection in Barrett's oesophagus and its implication in oesophageal adenocarcinoma***

***Professor Shan Rajendra - \$23,000***

Human papilloma virus (HPV) infections contribute to nearly 50% of virus-induced/associated cancers. Our preliminary landmark study to be published later this year has provided the first evidence of the presence of HPV infection in the squamo-columnar junction of the oesophagus. This transformation zone is known to be particularly susceptible to carcinogenic progression. In the proposed study, critical factors in the understanding of HPV oncogenesis including viral distribution and integration, local viral load, mechanisms of HPV oncogene transcription will be analysed in detail. This study, by genotyping the viruses involved and visualizing the viral DNA using in situ hybridization, and most importantly by using the state of the art techniques of laser capture microdissection and whole genome microarray analysis, will provide better understanding of the etiologic role of HPV infection in Barrett's oesophagus and dissect the mechanisms involved in oesophageal malignancies. It will have a great impact on public health as identification of high-risk individuals and development of effective preventive strategies become possible.

## ***Significance of Small Bowel Lipid Deposits Seen On Capsule Endoscopy***

***Dr John Wettenhall - \$2,866***

The proposed project aims to determine whether there is an association between the incidental finding of fatty deposits (xanthoma) in the small bowel on capsule endoscopy and abnormal lipid levels or diabetes. Capsule endoscopy is a procedure performed to investigate patients with bowel complaints with suspected disease of the small bowel. This procedure involves the patient swallowing a small camera encased in a capsule only a little larger than a large capsular medication. Films are taken as the capsule passes through the small bowel and the films are then read by a gastroenterologist who is able to determine relevant pathology. This is a relatively new diagnostic procedure. It has been noted by the principle investigator, Dr Wettenhall, that a significant proportion of patients undergoing this procedure have fatty deposits in their small bowel, almost always irrelevant to the clinical indication for having the procedure, i.e. they are an incidental finding. Similar fatty deposits, or xanthoma, can be seen in and under the skin and in tendons, and have long been recognised to be associated with increased lipid (cholesterol or triglyceride) levels and diabetes. As a new procedure, there is currently no evidence for whether small bowel xanthomas are also associated with these conditions. This project aims to determine whether such an association exists and will assist those doctors reading and interpreting capsule endoscopies to provide the referring doctor/GP with appropriate recommendations in patients for whom this incidental finding is made.

## ***Effect of sodium versus potassium salt in meals on central blood pressure and vascular function***

***Dr Kiran Ahuja - \$21,417***

Tasmania is the national capital for hypertension (high blood pressure) and related cardiovascular diseases (CVD). Research suggests a reduction of just 2.5% in blood pressure would reduce cardiac events and stroke events by more than 4 and 9%, respectively. One strategy known to reduce blood pressure is the adoption of a low sodium-salt diet. However, public health messages promoting the benefits of a low salt diet have had limited success and the salt intake for most Australians is still much higher than recommended. One barrier to the acceptance of a low salt diet is that many people are accustomed to the flavour of salty foods. Recently, it has been suggested that using a potassium-based "salt substitute" could result in reductions in blood pressure and still provide a salty flavour. Blood pressure has traditionally been measured on the upper arm using a blood pressure cuff; however blood pressure near the heart known as "central blood pressure" is a better predictor of cardiac and

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stroke events. Recent technological advances have seen the development of a non-invasive technique, known as pulse wave analysis, to measure central blood pressure and vascular function. The aim of this proposed study is to use this non-invasive technique to compare the effects of sodium and potassium salt intake on central blood pressure and blood vessel function. If improvements in blood pressure and possibly also in blood vessel function are observed, as anticipated, as a result of the substitution of potassium for sodium salt, it may lead to a new strategy for helping to lower salt intakes while maintaining the familiar salt flavour in foods, thereby aiding the fight to control hypertension and prevent the onset of CVD.

## **The Tasmanian Gynaecological and Anal Neoplasia Study – Northern Tasmania**

**Professor Richard Turner and A/Prof Amanda Dennis - \$37,038**

Cancer of the anus is a relatively rare cancer occurring more commonly in women than in men. Whilst the patterns of occurrence have been studied extensively in men who have sex with men and HIV populations, there have been few studies in women who are HIV negative. It is known however that women who have been treated for high grade pre-cancerous lesions of the cervix and vulva have a higher chance of anal cancer and pre-cancerous changes in the anal canal. Primarily, this study seeks to establish the prevalence of precancer of the anal canal in Tasmanian women who have recently been treated for high grade precancer or invasive cancers of the cervix or vulva that may have been caused by Human papilloma wart virus (HPV). Secondly, the study will investigate other factors (demography, family history, medical history, environmental exposures, sexual history etc.) influencing the development of anal precancerous changes.

## Vale Kevin Haas

Kevin Haas, a former Chairman of the Dorset "Friends" of Clifford Craig, passed away during September at Scottsdale after a long illness. A tireless champion for supporting the North East community, Mr Haas was the proprietor of the local newspaper, the North Eastern Advertiser, for many years.

He was an active member of the Dorset branch of the Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust and was Chairman from 1997 – 2004. The "memorable" Melbourne Cup Luncheons in Scottsdale which he and his wife Mary oversaw are fondly remembered by those who attended.

Mr Haas was farewelled at St Barnabas Anglican Church, Scottsdale on Monday 19th September.



*Kevin Haas with Dr John Morris*

### **Yes, I would like to help the Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust**

- I would like to make a one-off donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_
- I would like to have monthly donations of \$\_\_\_\_\_ deducted from my credit card.
- All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

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- Please send me information on remembering the Trust in my Will.
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- Please apply my gift to the North West Medical Research Fund.

#### **Thank you for your support**

Please post to:  
CLIFFORD CRAIG  
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PO Box 1963  
Launceston  
Tasmania 7250



Entrants prepare for the start.

## A Great Day for the Heart

A perfect spring morning and a new start/finish venue were contributing factors for the record field that participated in this year's Run for Your Heart fun run. The new "home" at Aurora Stadium proved popular as everyone had the opportunity to run on the hallowed turf as they departed the stadium for the 5 kilometre run/walk.

Most importantly, the event is intended to raise awareness for everyone to undertake regular exercise and lead a healthy lifestyle. The annual event raises money for clinical research into cardiac disease in Northern Tasmania and nearly \$4,000 was raised this year.

Around 300 people registered for Run for Your Heart and this is the most number of entrants since the event commenced four years ago. Next year, the event is expected to be bigger again as the Trust celebrates its 20th anniversary.

Thank you to everyone involved in the event, especially our sponsors RACT Health Insurance, Vos Constructions, Rae & Partners, The Running Company, Southern Cross Television, Examiner Newspaper, Southern Cross Television LAFM/Chilli and at+m.



Winners Josh Harris and Natalia Smith

## Message from the Chief Executive Officer



The announcement in early October of massive cuts to health spending was a shock to most Tasmanians and the issue is obviously a concern to our supporters, as I am asked on a daily basis our opinion and how it will affect the work of the Trust.

The current turmoil being caused by the health funding cuts is extremely concerning to our organisation, and for obvious reasons. The Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust was originally established by the community to strengthen the position of the Launceston General Hospital as a teaching hospital, and to raise funds to facilitate medical research

opportunities at the hospital into the diseases and illnesses that affect the people of our community. Our program has since expanded with establishment of the North West Medical Research Fund to cover the entire northern half of Tasmania.

Most importantly, our medical research program is designed to attract medical professionals to our region through the research opportunities that we provide. As an independent and apolitical organisation, we are able to remove the "static" from the political debate and accordingly, we fear the cost saving actions by the Government will have the opposite affect and simply force people to look elsewhere. As a result, the community will be penalised by reduced access to specialist services.

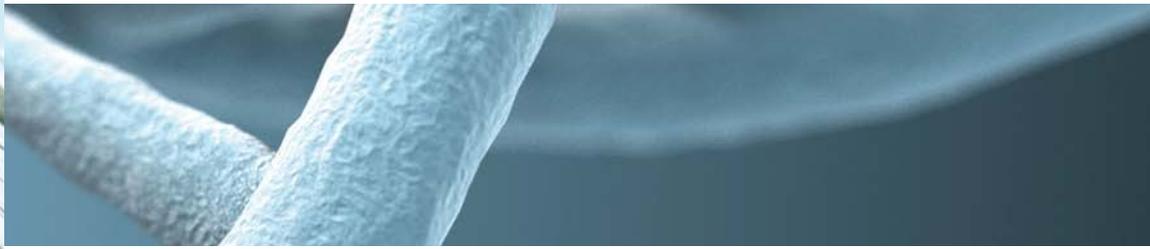
Most concerning of all though, is the medical specialists at the "coal face" are not being heard and the words of LGH staff specialist consultant, Dr Scott Parkes, rang loudly in my ears when he stated publicly that the proposed cuts "will cause preventable deaths and avoidable suffering". Furthermore, Dr Parkes has virtually pleaded for "the State and Federal Governments to actually work together to solve this problem rather than engage in fighting and bickering, which is what is happening at the moment."

We too hope that common sense does prevail, as it is the desire of the Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust to see continued advancement in our health system that benefits the health and wellbeing of the Tasmanian community.

On a lighter note, the end of the 2012 is rapidly approaching. On behalf of the Trust, may I thank you for your support and encouragement throughout the year and wish everyone a most enjoyable festive season.

**Peter Milne**

CEO



What a sensational night! On Friday 7th October at the Hotel Grand Chancellor in Launceston. Over 190 supporters enjoyed our tropical theme and were greeted with fruity cocktails and floral lei on arrival and they even sat at their own tropical island!

Guest speaker Paul Langford was inspirational with his amazing story of courage and hope during his recent experience with cancer. \$20,000 was raised to help fund medical research for the Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust.

After a sumptuous meal of fine food and wine, the party island danced well into the night with Col & the Remains.



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