

Meet our New Research Project Officer



Ms. Hayley Thompson has been appointed to the part time position of Research Project Officer for the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund. She is currently studying for her Masters Degree in Health Science (Child & Adolescent Health) at the University of Sydney. Hayley's duties will include the administration of our research grant projects and our Funding Partners program. Hayley is currently living with a friend from University. Her interests include reading, writing, watching movies, shopping and going out with friends. Hayley can be contacted on (02) 9633 4888 or email hayleythompson@arhrf.org.au.

COMPANIONS & FRIENDS OF THE FUND

Gold Companions

Martin Zaugg – District 9640
Rotary Club of Melville, WA

Companions

Monica Saville – from Don Stein,
Rotary Club of Winston Hills,
NSW

Ross Hawkins – Rotary Club of
Murwillumbah Central, Qld

Diamond Friends

Doug Beer – Rotary Club of
Cowra, NSW

Platinum Friends

Ian Graham – Rotary Club of
Dingley Village, Vic

Jennifer Thomas – Rotary Club of
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Silver Friends

Jennifer Henshall – Rotary Club of
Edwardstown, SA

Stephen Fisher – Rotary Club of
Forest Hill, Vic

Danny Vaughan – Rotary Club of
Brighton, Vic

Susan Baldock – Rotary Club of
Woy Woy, NSW

Frank H. Gleason – Rotary Club of
Belrose, NSW

Bronze Friends

Maria Townsend – Rotary Club of
Longreach, Qld

Ken Linfoot – Rotary Club of
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Peter Parsons – Rotary Club of
Adelaide, SA

Friends

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of Toowoomba, Qld

Fred Rees – Rotary Club of
Pahran, Vic

Bill Vernon / Lucia Vernon
– Rotary Club of Sussex Inlet,
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Maria Pires – Rotary Club of
Nunawading, Vic

T.H. McCosker / P.A. McCosker /
Mr. Temple / Mrs. Temple /
Mr. Lindsay / Mrs. Lindsay /
Mr. Pratt / Mrs. Pratt
– Rotary Club of Longreach,
Qld

Carolyn Lorraine – Rotary Club of
Adelaide, SA

Steve Ellery / David Nicoll / Simon
Coomans / Andrew Cameron
– from Rotary Club of
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Sylvia Byers – Rotary Club of
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Margaret Blake / Sue McDonald /
Dennis Roberts / Neil Glatz / Ron
Grosser / John Rix / Gavin Dallow
/ Ron Wright / Bill Traeger
– from Rotary Club of Berri, SA

Ros Clowes – Rotary Club of
Mount Waverley, Vic

Casey Tan – Rotary Club of
Carlton, Vic

Ian Taylor / Kim Stokes
– Rotary Club of Geraldton-
Greenough, WA

Leif Nielson / Andrew Whalley /
John Power / Graham Outwaite
/ Bill Maile / Mel Harris / Owen
Gould / Ian Gott / Gilbert Alison
/ Noel Gorrie

– Rotary Club of
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John McNaughton / Peter Evans
– Rotary Club of Newcastle,
NSW



**Australian Rotary
Health Research Fund**
Post Office Box 779
Parramatta
New South Wales 2124

I wish to make a donation.

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Please credit the

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Enclosed is my cheque for \$

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Expiry date □□ □□

Signature

UPDATE

Australian Rotary Health Research Fund

www.arhrf.org.au arhrf@arhrf.org.au



A U T U M N • 2 0 0 4

Where to from Here

The story of the ARHRF is an exciting one. From inception in 1981 to now the Fund has been involved in community based health research in various fields, from cot death, adolescent health, family health – and a few others thrown in – to our recent focus on mental illness. We provide in excess of \$1million per year on research and awareness.

Our awareness campaign through community forums is making an impression to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. Maybe we should now sit back and let the story end.

After all, the achievements are outstanding with outcomes all Rotarians should be proud of. But I for one hate story endings, particularly when they are still exciting. So shouldn't we let the story evolve?

To date the Fund has developed through the vision of many Rotarians who served on and off the board, a dedicated research committee and staff who worked to give it life and nurtured it to see it blossom into an amazing national community service program for Rotary. The Fund has united Rotary in Australia. This is evidenced by the fact that 97% of clubs in Australia are contributors.

In the health industry we are now recognised as one of



the largest independent health research funds in the country.

Our mental illness theme, which commenced in the year 2000, has provided many benefits to the Australian community and to Rotary. Over \$3million has been provided to research, with some promising results. Almost 300 Mental Health forums have been undertaken nationally to create awareness and assist in de-stigmatising this debilitating illness. Rotary is recognised as an organisation that cares for its community.

With our mental illness theme in its fifth year the Board believes that it is now appropriate to review its strategy for the next three years. (if we want to maintain the excitement in our story). We will still maintain our focus on mental illness and our role as a research funder. However in order to maintain the enthusiasm of Rotary clubs and Rotarians we need to consider the following issues:

■ What benefits do we want from research and what is a reasonable expectation from our funding?

- Should we be concentrating on specific themes within the mental health field or looking at early intervention programs?
- Are we communicating well enough to Rotarians?
- Are the researchers communicating adequately to the ARHRF?
- Should consumers (sufferers), carers and clinicians be involved in the selection of specific research areas within mental health field? If so how? Currently our Research Committee is the recommending body.
- How do we maintain the interest and a sense of ownership of Rotarians and clubs in the ARHRF?
- How can we attract community interest – non-Rotarians?
- Should we continue the forum program?
- What opportunities exist to involve Rotary Clubs in other areas of relevant research?

These issues will be addressed at a one-day workshop on 30 April, involving members of our Board, Research Committee, key figures in mental health, consumers and carers. I will be pleased on behalf of the Board to report the outcome in our next newsletter.

Meanwhile keep the contributions coming as the needs for medical research in Australia are growing. Our illnesses today are more complex. How do we tackle behavioral problems in early childhood, or the increase in the incidence of diabetes and asthma in our community?

Research! Research! Research!

Help create better health for all Australians through your ARHRF.




Carlingford Rotarians 'Lend a Hand' to Assist Bowelscan

Led by Joseph Mack, Carlingford Rotarians assisted Walter Leijten from East Gosford Rotary Club and the Bowelscan staff with the distribution of 35,000 kits, plus bins and posters as well as letterbox leaflets to 76 Rotary clubs in the Sydney Metropolitan area from Berowra to Campbelltown and the Blue Mountains.

Joseph was assisted by Gary Hayman, James Addo, Colin Booth, Norrie Boorman, Joy Pogson, John Waters, Alan Gregoire and Geoff Saville.

This year there will be a total of 444 pharmacies participating in the program making the Metropolitan and Central Coast Bowelscan program the largest in Australia.

From 2004, all Bowelscan programs throughout Australia are now coordinated by the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund (ARHRF). 



Walter talks with PDG Dick White, a Director of the ARHRF and DG Danny Low whilst Barbara Vigenser prepares an order.



Walter sits proudly in the foreground with an order of Bowelscan kits.

From L to R Joseph Mack, AG Monica Saville, District 9680 Chairman, ARHRF, PDG Dick White, DG Danny Low and our President Brian Lawrenson.



IFFR supports ARHRF

The International Fellowship of Flying Rotarians recently made a donation of \$10,000 to the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund. The funds, raised through a fly-away following the Brisbane International Convention last year were proudly handed to Past Chairman PDG Denis Green at the ARHRF Chairman's Dinner in Wagga Wagga last November. PDG Alan Grady as Chairman of the IFFR presented the cheque.

The ARHRF was delighted to present Alan as a Gold Companion of the ARHRF and to his fellow IFFR member Mike Scarce, as a Companion. Alan and Mike were the two pilots who made it possible for the Health Fund and RDU tour to remote clubs in last August.

Truly Rotary in partnership. 

...Counseling for Women Diagnosed with Gynaecological Cancer

'Counselling to reduce anxiety and depressive symptoms in women with a new diagnosis of gynaecological cancer'. Dr Rodney W Petersen, University of Melbourne, Vic. \$57,596

Like many people newly diagnosed with cancer, women with gynaecological cancer experience intense feelings of helplessness, anxiety and uncertainty. In fact, studies show that between 47 to 50 per cent of women newly diagnosed with gynaecological cancer (cancer in female organs such as the cervix, uterus and ovaries) merit a diagnosis of moderate or severe depression or anxiety.

With funding from the ARHRF, researchers at the University of Melbourne will investigate whether including four short counseling sessions in the patient's treatment will reduce the anxiety and depression suffered by this group of women, and ultimately improve their quality of life.

Interestingly, three out of the four counseling sessions will be conducted by nurses involved in the patients' care in the patients' home, as part of their home visits. If the counseling sessions do prove beneficial, including them as part of the patients' standard treatment would be quite inexpensive.

...Protecting the Mental Health and Well Being of Children in Home-Based Care

'The mental health and well-being of children and adolescents in home-based care'. Professor Michael Sawyer, University of Adelaide, SA. \$59,655

More than 18,000 young Australians for one reason or another are cared for outside of their own homes.

Studies have shown that children that live in residential institutions have a higher prevalence of mental health problems. However, today more than 90 per cent of children

placed in out-of-home care live in home-based settings, (that is, they live with foster families or with relatives other than their parents) rather than in residential institutions.

Researchers at the University of Adelaide will use an ARHRF grant to examine the mental health of children and adolescents who live in home-based care in South Australia.

Significantly, the researchers will conduct the study in collaboration with the South Australian Department of Human Services, Family and Youth Services branch ensuring that relevant findings are translated into changes in policy and practice.

...Will Exercise Slow the Progression of Alzheimer's?

'Physical activity: improving mental health outcomes for Alzheimer's Disease'. Dr Nicola Lautenschlager, University of WA. \$60,000

Alzheimer's disease is one of the most common mental illnesses affecting older people. While at present there is no cure for Alzheimer's, attempts to slow down the progression of the disease are showing promise.

Researchers from the University of Western Australia have received an ARHRF grant to assess whether a 24-week exercise program will slow the decline of patients with mild Alzheimer's. Specifically they will be examining whether exercise postpones the onset of further disability and prolong the patients' ability to live independently.

...Would Having Knowledge of Successful Treatments Encourage More Women to Seek Help for Eating Disorders?

'Can providing information about 'treatments that work' close the gap for people with un-met need for treatment of an eating disorder? An intervention study'. Dr Phillipa Hay, James Cook University, Qld. \$36,000

It is argued that poor knowledge of effective treatments stops

sufferers of depression and other mental illnesses seeking treatment. However, to date no one has investigated the extent of knowledge people suffering from eating disorders have or don't have of successful treatment options.

An ARHRF grant has been awarded to researchers at James Cook University in Queensland to test the effects of a brief educational program about successful treatment outcomes for eating disorders on a sample group of young women.

As only one in 10 young people with eating disorders seek help, identifying why there might be such a reluctance to seek assistance can only be beneficial.

...Parent-run Programs v School-based Programs for Anxious Children

'Comparing the costs and effects of school-based and parent-run help for anxious children'. Professor Ronald Rapee, Macquarie University, NSW. \$54,500

Anxiety is one of the most common mental disorders and produces a marked interference in people's lives. Anxiety in childhood is a serious problem in its own right and can also lead to other difficulties later in life.

Research previously funded by ARHRF demonstrated the potentially powerful impact of educating parents to help their own children through the use of written materials and minimal therapist intervention.

This year researchers at Macquarie University in NSW have received an ARHRF grant to compare the costs and effects of parent-run programs versus school-based programs for anxious children. If, as predicted, the parent-run programs are more effective: governments will have a more affordable option for early intervention for anxiety; the demands on an already overloaded school system will be reduced; and parents will be able to play a greater role in the mental health of their children.



Dr. Gavin Lambert (right), Deepak Haikerwal (centre) and Jenny Star (left) examining the link between depressive illness, the sympathetic nervous system and heart disease.

Understanding the Link between Depression and Heart Disease



Depression is now recognised as a risk factor for the development of heart disease. This risk is independent of conventional risk factors such as smoking, obesity, high cholesterol, diabetes and high blood pressure.

Researchers from the Baker Heart Research Institute in Victoria have for the second year received an ARHRF grant to continue their investigation into why depression is among the risk factors for heart disease.

Dr Gavin Lambert from the Baker Heart Research Institute heads the research team.

Dr Lambert and his colleagues suspect that the sympathetic nervous system, which is the part

of the nervous system that makes the heart beat harder and faster, could somehow be involved as well as an increased susceptibility to blood clotting.

"We have recruited over 20 people with depression to our study so far," said Dr Lambert, "and we have measured how quickly or slowly the chemical messenger noradrenaline is released from their hearts' nerves".

"Our observations to date indicate that for the people who are not on antidepressants the release of noradrenaline is either very high or very low but not what is considered in the normal range," he said.


"Understanding the reason why this difference occurs presents us with an exciting challenge."

"This year we will be using our grant from the Health Fund to further investigate whether certain

antidepressants could actually help reduce the risk of people with depression developing heart disease," Dr Lambert said.

"Without this grant from the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund this research would be extremely difficult to fund," he added.

In an unexpected twist last year Dr Lambert's team found that the production of the chemical messenger serotonin (which has been linked with depression) was at its lowest in healthy individuals in winter and was directly related to the level of bright sunlight. The researchers then examined the seasonal variation in suicides in Victoria in relation to the number of hours of bright sunlight. They directly correlated.

This unanticipated discovery, while not the main focus of the team's study, was published recently in the prestigious medical journal *The Lancet* and the *American Journal of Psychiatry*. 

Research Projects Funded in 2004 in our Mental Illness Program...

Improving the Identification and Treatment of Depression

'Pathways to care for depression in rural and metropolitan South Australia'
Dr Jeff Fuller, University of Adelaide, SA.
\$20,000

Less than half of Australians with a mental illness actually seek professional help and up to two-thirds of people currently suffering depression will remain undiagnosed and untreated, or receive inappropriate or inadequate care. Furthermore most people that do seek help will not do so in the early stages of their depression.

Researchers from the University of Adelaide have received an ARHRF grant to try and understand why this is so, specifically in metropolitan and rural South Australia.

The researchers will map the medical care 'pathways' of people with depression, i.e. who are the person's primary medical care contacts after they believe they may have depression.

It is hoped that this research will identify areas where linkages can be improved between GPs, other health specialists and mental health service providers.

...Mental Health in the Workplace

'Reducing the individual and social burden of mental health problems in working adults'. Dr Kristy Sanderson, Queensland University of Technology, Qld. \$55,650

With 1 in 6 working adults experiencing a mental illness each year, the workplace is increasingly recognised as an important

component of a mentally healthy community.

Researchers at Queensland University of Technology have received funding from the ARHRF to examine the personal and economic impact of depression and anxiety on employees, as well as the characteristics that create a mentally healthy workplace.

The researchers hope to estimate how much of the economic burden of being unable to perform adequately at work because of a mental illness is directly borne by the individual through lost earnings compared to the costs borne by the employer.

From these findings, educational materials on how to encourage mentally healthy workers and workplaces will be developed for both employers and employees.

ARHRF INDIGENOUS SCHOLARSHIP. A Letter...

...from Clare Patterson, the ARHRF Indigenous Health Scholarship recipient supported by The Rotary Club of Sydney CBD.

To my dear friends at Rotary,

I just wanted to send a note to thank you all for your continued support and for the kindness that you have all shown me.

I am very excited to be a part of your family and for the continued Partnership that we will share together in striving for better Indigenous health in this country.

Your financial support makes it possible for me to be at university and to be finishing off my medical degree at the University of New South Wales.

This year I have already started back into the 5th year of the 6-year long course. (So we have one more year to go after this year, and we will all look forward to my graduation at the end of 2005!!)

I had a great academic year last year and passed with all credits!!! I have you all to thank very much for that, as you all played a huge part in those results alongside me.

Thank you so much.

Lets feel proud together of what we are achieving! I started back early January this year and have been stationed down in the Illawarra Area Health Service once again this year till the end of March.

I am currently undertaking an attachment in General Practice at a surgery in Warrawong, not far from the Port Kembla Steel Works. I am enjoying my time here and loving the teaching that I am receiving.

In the next couple of weeks I am being sent down to Ulladulla to complete a rural health term down



Husband and wife team, Ron and Joan Richards (mentor) with Clare Patterson.

there, also in General Practice. I can't wait to go!!

I will be staying at the Holiday Haven caravan park on the beach for 2 weeks while I attend and consult in the practice every day!!!! (It will be like coming home to a little holiday every night!! I can't wait!)

I also have a number of connections with the local Indigenous community down there and look forward to them taking me 'mutton fishing' off the rocks! It will be a wonderful opportunity for me to also network with people in the Indigenous community and other various allied health professionals.

I look forward to meeting you all soon when I am back in the big city in early April! I am excited for the opportunity to meet you all in person and share with you about myself and look forward to our long association together.

Thank you all, once again from the bottom of my heart!

My best wishes to you all, 'til we meet soon.

Clare Patterson



Clubs recognised by the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund

At a recent Presidents' Meeting in District 9680, four clubs were recognised for their generous contributions to the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund.

The Rotary Club of Pennant Hills has contributed a magnificent \$128,000 over the life of the Fund. This represents over \$3,000 per member. Turramurra Club held a most successful trailer raffle which raised \$10,000 for the Fund. This brought their per capita



From L to R: ARHRF District 9680 Chairman PPMonica Saville, Pres. Ken Broadhead (Wahroonga \$250 pp), ADGlan Lucas (for Pres Berman White, Balmoral \$1,000), DG Danny Low, Pres Warren Soos (Turramurra \$500 pp) and Pres Lyn Pereira (Pennant Hills \$3,000 pp).

donation to \$500 per member. Wahroonga Club organised the District Golf Day with a share of the profits going to the Fund. This brought their total to \$250 per member.

One of the smallest clubs in the District, Balmoral, has been a generous supporter of the Fund throughout the years. Their most recent donation brought their total to \$1,000 per member.

DG Danny Low presented Banners of Appreciation to each of the clubs.