

# Spinnaker News

Dec 2022

Pioneering excellence for better health, together

## 2023 Annual Award Recipients Announced

On 22 November we gathered with friends old and new to celebrate the award of the 2023 grants to 10 of our most innovative, big thinkers. Held at the spectacular Walyalup Civic Centre in Fremantle, the night was a wonderful opportunity for our donors and researchers to meet and for our all of our guests to hear about the pioneering research currently being done here in Western Australia.

The incredible generosity of our donors meant we were able to **increase the value of the grants to \$20,000** this year and in total we awarded \$150,000 to two Early Career and six Seed grants, as well as one Barry Marshall Travel Award and the inaugural Nicholas Way Award for early career top up.

The Nicholas Way Award was established by Prof Sue Fletcher, who was one of our keynote speakers on the night. **Sue has had an exceptionally successful career in the treatment of rare genetic disease and was inspired by Nicholas' fierce determination as he faced life living with motor neuron disease, continuing his career as a successful journalist and living his life to the full.** We were very sad to learn of Nicholas' passing earlier this year and send our warmest condolences to his wife Karen, family and friends. We are also very sure that his ambitious spirit will be carried forward by the recipient of the award, Dr Tess Evans, an ICU doctor with a deep passion for



**Spinnaker Health Research Foundation Grant Recipients 2023 pictured from left: Dr Dror Maor, Ms Kathryn Watson, Dr Rodrigo Carlessi, Ms Rebecca Hahn, Ms Sarah Clarke, Dr Duncan Purtill**

her patients and the improvement of their comfort and condition.

Sue's fellow keynote speaker was Clinical Professor Adnan Khattak who shared the achievements he has made since receiving a \$100,000 Spinnaker Collaborative Grant in 2017 to advance the treatment of patients with stage 4 melanoma. **Adnan and his team of collaborators have seen a dramatic increase in the survival rate of patients** and importantly, saved many patients from unnecessary and often debilitating side effects of **immunotherapy** by better understanding who will receive a positive result and for whom the treatment will have nothing but a negative outcome. Adnan's work has not just saved lives but is paving the way toward an ever-increasing survival rate that in just five years has doubled.

Professor Sue Fletcher AO FAHMS, is a Senior Principal Research Fellow at Murdoch University, Chief Scientific Officer at PYC Therapeutics, a voluntary member of the Spinnaker Scientific Advisory Committee and a

generous benefactor. Sue's work has remarkably impacted the life of so many people, including many of the 2 million Australians living with a rare disease. **She shared a breathtaking video of a young boy whose mobility was restored in a few short weeks because of a treatment she developed with her team** and hopes that in the future the capacity for bio pharmacotherapy can be more broadly available to cure degenerative neurological disorders.

Hearing from Sue and Adnan was a spectacular backdrop for the recipients of grants on the night as they both shared stories of their journey, their failures and their passion for their patients. While they are already changing the health of our community, the 10 awardees are our next generation of great clinical researchers with a shared passion for the health of their patients, now and into the future. And that future is definitely **looking bright in the capable hands of these very clever people.**

**see page 3 or a full list of recipients**

# A message from the CEO



"Are you kidding me, it is nearly Christmas!" I exclaimed to the team on Monday. We have been so heads down in the Annual Awards that it seemed a day had passed in the space of a month. I love this time of the year. Awarding our grants is the

absolute highlight of the year for us as it shines a light on the exceptional work happening in our hospitals and the phenomenal support of our community.

It really is a moment to reflect on what our small and dedicated team go to work each day to do – **match the passion of our donors to the commitment of our researchers to make the world a better place for us all.**

I also love this time of the year because I get to take a very low-key festive break to spend time with my

family and friends and reflect on the many things that make my life so worthwhile.

I hope you get that same chance and I send you my very warmest wishes for a healthy, happy and relaxing festive season. And, as always, I love to hear from you so please send me a festive message at [dana.henderson@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:dana.henderson@health.wa.gov.au).

Dana Henderson, CEO

## New initiative to tackle intergenerational metabolic disease risk and lifestyle factors

This year Spinnaker set a refined strategic path to adopt theme-based research nodes alongside our traditional focus on early career and seed investment in research. The first of those to commence is the West Australian Family Health Initiative; a multidisciplinary examination of metabolic disease and the intergenerational influence on the risks and determinants.

**To launch the initiative we were very pleased to be awarded two Telethon grants to facilitate a WA first program of research in to the prevalence of fatty liver disease and the long-term health risks from it.** The first grant facilitated the purchase of WA's first Fibroscan, which will allow doctors at Fiona Stanley Hospital to run simple and non-invasive tests on children who are identified at risk of fatty liver. The second grant will provide reference data on fatty liver in WA children, identifying characteristics of those

at highest risk of cardiometabolic disease who would benefit from targeted interventions.

Grant recipient and project lead Dr Oyekoya Ayonrinde said the findings of the program will inform a better targeted, evidence-based approach to early assessment of pre-clinical cardiometabolic risk or disease in children.

**"We expect clinicians, government and public health officials to embrace our expected findings towards informing practice and translation to new models of care."**  
**Said Dr Ayonrinde.**

We are so grateful to Telethon and to all of the generous WA supporters who donate each year to ensure significant funding is available for children's health research. We were also really excited to be involved in the APM Charity trail at the Telethon Family Festival in October, helping to raise over \$71 million for the kids of WA!! It was a tremendous day, not hampered in the least by the unseasonal rain, and we were almost overwhelmed by the many tenacious and inquisitive children who visited our stall, taking part in a competition to share their ideas on what big health problem they would serve. The responses were awe inspiring and

three lucky families are off to Rottnest and Adventure World thanks to the generous donations of prizes from SeaLink and Adventure World.

Here are some big ideas from WA's families who tackled the question "If I could solve one big health problem it would be.....?"

**"Have clean water everywhere"**

**"Provide genetic screening for families"**

**"Research rare diseases so people who are sick can get more advice and not feel so alone"**

**"Cure depression"**

**"Better understand the brain so kids who think differently can learn better and not feel so ashamed"**

and this one, so close to the Spinnaker heart:

**"Make men go the doctor so their dad would be alive today."**

We would love to hear from you about your big ideas on how to solve a health problem. Maybe one of our clever researchers is already working on it - or could be! Send your ideas to [admin@spinnakerhealth.org.au](mailto:admin@spinnakerhealth.org.au)

Proudly supported by

# 2023 Spinnaker Grants

Project Title	Chief Investigator	Donors
Predicting liver cancer risk to improve early detection and patient outcomes	<b>Dr Rodrigo Carlessi</b> Researcher, Curtin University	Len and Fran Mihaljevich & David Clegg
Development of a new blood test to identify high risk multiple myeloma	<b>Ms Sarah Clarke</b> Medical Scientist - PathWest,, Fiona Stanley Hospital	Austal Company and Staff
Improving bone mineral density estimation from DXA scans of the forearm using AI techniques -facilitating early screening for osteoporosis	<b>Dr Ashu Gupta</b> Medical Oncology Consultant	Fremantle Hospital Ladies Auxiliary
A new method of detecting whether medications used in heart failure patients can damage the heart itself.	<b>Ms Rebecca Hahn</b> Cardiothoracic Research Nurse, Fiona Stanley Hospital	Fewster Family Award
Comparing the efficacy of intravenous antibiotics to those given through the bone in Foot and Ankle Surgery	<b>Dr Dror Maor</b> Knee, Foot and Ankle Orthopaedic Surgeon, SMHS	SMHS Staff giving for Spinnaker Grant
Improving outcomes for patients with myelofibrosis receiving bone marrow transplant treatment	<b>Dr Duncan Purtil</b> Consultant Physiologist - Haematology, Fiona Stanley Hospital	The Rotary Club of Fremantle and Attadale
Use finger-prick testing to check blood levels of methotrexate of patients with rheumatoid arthritis.	<b>Dr Chanakya Sharma</b> Consultant - Rheumatology, Fiona Stanley Hospital	The City of Cockburn
Comprehensive Understanding of the effects of inflammation during Pregnancy and early life on Infant immune Development (CUPID) study	<b>Professor Shailender Mehta</b> Consultant Paediatric Neonatologist, Fiona Stanley Hospital	The Stan Perron Charitable Foundation
Award	Recipient	Donor
Barry Marshall Travel Award	<b>Ms Kathryn Watson</b> Physiotherapist, Fiona Stanley Hospital,	Professor Barry Marshall AC and Mrs Adrienne Marshall & Business Events Perth
Nicholas Way Fund For Early Career Research	<b>Dr Tess Evans</b> Advanced Trainee Registrar - Intensive Care Unit, Fiona Stanley Hospital	Professor Sue Fletcher AO FAHMS

## Pregcovac study

This study was such an important project for our community, not just to bridge a knowledge gap, but to give pregnant women and their family's peace of mind at such a critical time for us all. As COVID descended upon us, there was genuine concern about the efficacy and safety of vaccination, and this was magnified for pregnant women who were unsure as to how it might affect their unborn child.

Here in WA we didn't know the exact number of pregnant women who were vaccinated, so the team at Fiona Stanley Hospital, led by Dr Shail Mehta, commenced this research to better understand both the uptake of vaccination and the concerns of those women.

The results showed vaccination was accepted widely within the study population, with minimally reported side effects from the vaccine, and these were reported as mild. In the exploration of women's attitudes, safety concerns were the biggest worry and barrier to take up.

It's thanks to the positive data gathered in this study that we can further inform and encourage pregnant women who may have concerns surrounding vaccination.

**Research is imperative not only to inform health professionals but also provide a better understanding of patients' feelings and perceptions, something sometimes overlooked, but extremely important to overcome in order to provide health carers with evidenced based learning**

**that they need to dispel common misconceptions and reassure our community.**

Well done WA and well done to the project team in initiating such an important study at such an uncertain time.



**Monica and Emma, with Research Midwife Nicole Catalano**

**"I felt valued that this study explored mum's feelings and emotions during the pregnancy and felt that future mums were informed about the whole process." Monica, research participant**

# What we are up to.....

2023 is going to be our most exciting and challenging year yet! Because of our amazing donors, this past financial year we raised a record amount of money allowing us to award our greatest amount of annual grants and funding for first-in-WA equipment.

You have helped us raise the bar and, just as we encourage our researchers to do, we have lifted our eyes to the future horizon and started to dream about what if.

What if....

- **We had \$250,000 to match our commitment to launching the Spinnaker Prize for medical innovations at our hospitals?**
- **We had funding to initiate the exploratory research to test the capacity of the 3D BioPrinter we bought with an amazing donation from Kath Wales, to grow lung tissue and repair organs?**
- **We could expand the WA Family Health Initiative and fund even more projects that create evidence based interventions for children at the greatest risk of life-long disease?**
- **What if we had even more money for our Early Career and Seed Grants?**
- **What if we could make it to the \$1million target for the Janine Chalwell Grants?...we are already almost halfway there!**

So, we are getting ready for a very big and busy year. **Can you help us get there? We would love you to consider making a gift to Spinnaker this Christmas.** We know it can be a hard time of the year with so much happening which is why **we are making a commitment that every dollar donated in December will be directly applied to research** and we will cover all of our operational costs. You can even tell us where you would like it to go - to grants, to family health, to melanoma, to men's health or maybe even as a general donation so we can apply it to the area of greatest priority at the moment. Just leave a note when you make your gift and we will make sure your Christmas wish comes true.

## We wish you health and happiness over the festive season and for 2023!

**DONATION FORM**      Donate online at: [www.spinnakerhealth.org.au/donate](http://www.spinnakerhealth.org.au/donate)

**With your help we can continue to support the important work of the people in our hospitals who are dedicated to ensuring the very best health outcomes for all West Australians.**

**PLEASE DONATE TODAY.**

**THANK YOU. Your donation will support research that helps our community the most. Donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible.**

### I would like to make

- Single donation  
 Recurring donation every:  
\_\_\_\_\_ ie week/month

### I would like to give a gift of

- \$25     \$50     \$100  
 \$250     \$500     \$1000  
Other amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Please direct my gift to

- Where it's needed       Melanoma Research  
 Spinnaker Prize       Men's Health  
 Family Health       Grants

### Personal details

Name \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to remain anonymous      My gift is in memory of \_\_\_\_\_

### Please find enclosed my cash/cheque payable to Spinnaker Health Research Foundation or;

Please debit my donation to the approved credit card     M/Card     Visa    Cardholder name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Card number \_\_\_\_\_    Expiry Date \_\_\_\_\_    Signature \_\_\_\_\_

I would not like to receive regular new, updates and invitations from Spinnaker

I would like to receive information on how to make a gift in my Will to support Spinnaker

**Please return this form to Spinnaker Health Research Foundation, PO Box 480, FREMANTLE WA 6959**

**Email:** [admin@spinnakerhealth.org.au](mailto:admin@spinnakerhealth.org.au)    **Phone:** 08 6152 6278