

## Research in UNSW Medicine

*It has been an incredibly busy start to 2011. A problem with the RGMS system has delayed applications for NHMRC grants by one month, which has kept everyone fully occupied. At the same time, we have launched a Postdoctoral Academy Program which has been a great success. Significant progress has also been made with the establishment of an upper campus Bio-Analytical Centre. Both the Mass Spectroscopy and Bio-Microscopy Units are now well established. We are anxiously awaiting the arrival of the MRI for the Animal Imaging Facility which will provide a state-of-the-art imaging facility for animal based research. Plans are also underway to establish a flow cytometry facility on upper campus which will again enhance the excellent support facilities to biomedical researchers on this campus. As many of you may be aware, the Committee on Research and Members of the Academic Board are participating in a review of the UNSW PhD program, and any members of the Faculty who would like to contribute to this important discussion should contact Professor Bill Sewell who is representing the Faculty on this important strategic issue.*

**Denis Wakefield**  
Associate Dean Research

## \$120,000 raised to help find a Cure for Juvenile Arthritis

**At a recent function The George Kranitis Juvenile Arthritis Foundation presented UNSW Medicine with \$120,000 raised to help find a cure for Juvenile Arthritis.**

In presenting the cheque Mary Kranitis said she was honoured to be achieving a dream of helping to find a cure for children suffering from Uveitis and Arthritis. Whilst arthritis is usually associated with the pain of growing old, Mary's son George was diagnosed with chronic arthritis at the age of two. George, now eleven, has juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), a painful autoimmune disorder that causes stiffness and inflammation of the joints. He also has severe inflammation of his eyes (uveitis) which is a serious complication of this disease. The condition causes the body's immune system to attack joints and the eye as it would foreign objects.

Mary decided it was time to find out what causes the condition, which affects one in every 1000 Australian children and, hopefully, find a cure. She founded the George Kranitis Juvenile Arthritis Scholarship to raise money for medical research. Mary's fundraising efforts commenced in early April 2007 with the inaugural Juvenile Arthritis Dinner. The money raised since then has been used to fund the George Kranitis Research Fellowship within the ocular immunology unit in the School of Medical Sciences where a senior researcher is undertaking to better understand more about this chronic disease with the object of finding a cure.

In accepting the cheque, Associate Dean (Research) Professor Denis Wakefield commented "If you want to achieve anything in this life you need a champion and we have one in Mary Kranitis.

To read more about the impact of Juvenile arthritis and the research being conducted at UNSW Medicine through the generosity of The George Kranitis Juvenile Arthritis Foundation, please click on the links below.

<http://tv.unsw.edu.au/video/mary-kranitis-founder-of-the-juvenile-uveitis-research-fund>

<http://tv.unsw.edu.au/video/juvenile-arthritis/uveitis-research-fund-faculty-of-medicine>



Mary and John Kranitis with Prof Terry Campbell, Prof Denis Wakefield and Dr Matthew Miles present the cheque to UNSW.

## NHMRC Program Grant Awarded to Professors Michelle Haber, Glenn Marshall and Murray Norris

Professors Michelle Haber AM, Glenn Marshall and Murray Norris from Children's Cancer Institute Australia (CCIA) were awarded an NHMRC Program Grant worth \$6 million over 5 years and commencing in 2012. The Program Grant will fund further research into childhood cancer, and specifically neuroblastoma, the most common solid tumour in children and one of the most aggressive forms of childhood cancer. Professor Haber, CCIA's Executive Director and President of the international Advances in Neuroblastoma Research Association, accepted the Program Grant on behalf of her co-investigators at CCIA in Melbourne last week at a presentation ceremony with The Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Mark Butler. The Program Grant is one of only nine awarded throughout the country and one of two awarded in NSW. The Grant is focused on translational research, involving new drug discovery and clinical trials, with the goal of improving the outcome for children diagnosed with neuroblastoma.



A specific goal of the Program Grant will be to support three clinical trials for children with relapsed neuroblastoma. One of the new phase I/II trials involves a combination therapy of two drugs, valproate and gamma-interferon, which work together to inhibit tumour growth by blocking angiogenesis. Both these drugs have anti-cancer action but have not been used for the treatment of childhood cancer before. The team had previously published in vitro and in vivo studies showing that the two drugs were far more effective when used together, rather than separately, leading directly to the design of this clinical trial. In addition, neuroblastoma tumour growth is known to be driven by the MYCN oncogene. The team has demonstrated that high tumour levels of two MYCN target genes, ODC1 and MRP1, are strongly prognostic of poor clinical outcome in neuroblastoma patients, and are excellent candidates for molecular targeted therapy. They have recently shown that pharmaceutical inhibition of the ODC1 gene synergises with standard chemotherapy in laboratory models of neuroblastoma, to much more effectively block tumour growth. They have also developed a small molecule inhibitor of the MRP1 gene that similarly enhances the effectiveness of standard chemotherapy in neuroblastoma models, and these approaches will form the basis of the two other clinical trials for neuroblastoma that will be supported by this Program Grant.

The Grant also proposes developing new small molecule drugs that will enhance the efficacy of other promising neuroblastoma therapeutic approaches, and others which might ultimately have the ability to eliminate pre-malignant cell populations harboured by children, thus leading to a childhood cancer prevention strategy. These new drugs will be developed through high throughput screening of large chemical small molecule libraries at the recently opened ACRF Drug Discovery Centre for Childhood Cancer, housed at the Lowy Cancer Research Centre.

This funding has significantly increased the links between CCIA and Sydney Children's Hospital, so that they now comprise a comprehensive cancer centre for children. The capacity to take discovery from the bench at CCIA to the bedside at Sydney Children's Hospital has been recognised by funding agencies as a highly successful model of translational research. The NHMRC Program Grant brings the total funds awarded to CCIA to over \$17 million this year, with Cancer Institute NSW and Cancer Council NSW also awarding Program Grants to Professors Haber, Marshall and Norris for highly translational research, and with a number of Project Grants also being awarded to CCIA researchers by NHMRC and a variety of other funding agencies.

## Professor Minoti Apte

Congratulations to Professor Minoti Apte who has been accepted as a Fellow of the American Gastro-enterological Association.

Fellowship is an honour bestowed by the AGA for superior professional achievement in practice and/or research in the field of gastroenterology.

## 20 April : NHMRC/ARC Fellowships - Make a note in your diary!

### NHMRC Early Career Fellowships and ARC Discovery Early Career Research Awards – 2011 Round

The Research Strategy Office (RSO), in partnership with the Faculty of Medicine, is conducting a 2-hour workshop on the NHMRC Early Career Fellowships (previously Training Fellowships) and the ARC Discovery Early Career Research Awards (new scheme). This workshop will outline briefly the requirements of these schemes, including key dates and assessment criteria.

#### NHMRC Early Career Fellowships (previously Training Fellowships)

Professors Peter Gunning and Wendy Jessup

#### ARC DECRA's

Dr Laurent Rivory

#### Who should attend?

- Researchers who are looking at options for post-doctoral research
- Researchers who have advanced applications to either scheme in development
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**Date:** Wednesday 20 April 2011

**Time:** 10.00am-12.00pm

**Venue:** LG03 Lecture Theatre, Wallace Wurth

**Register Now:** <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/26SXFJ8>

Staff from the RSO and the Grants Management Office (GMO) will be in attendance to ask strategic and technical questions relating to this scheme.

*The following workshops have also been organised, final details and registration will be announced in due course:*

**16 June\*** : NHMRC Grants – Response to reviewers : Professor Margaret Morris - Venue : TBA

**4 August\*** : NHMRC Project Grants #1 : Prof Andrew Lloyd - Venue : TBA

**8 December \***: NHMRC Project Grants #2 : Speaker TBA - Venue : TBA

*\*Date to be confirmed*

*Please note these dates in your diary and check the Faculty website regularly for updates.*

## Postdoctoral Academy Program



This Program is proving to be very popular and several successful sessions have already been held. The program consists of two semesters (Semester 2 builds upon Semester 1) of 13 weekly seminar and discussion-style workshops covering key topics with a networking function following each session. Participants who attend 80% of the workshops will receive a formal certificate. This can be achieved over a 2 year cycle of workshops.

**To register, simply log into MyUNSW, select 'My Staff Profile' tab and choose 'Training Registration' in the left hand menu. Select the course type 'Postdoctoral Academy' and choose the courses you wish to attend. You will be sent an email confirming your registration.**

We look forward to seeing you there. Please do not hesitate to contact Karen Walker ([k.walker@unsw.edu.au](mailto:k.walker@unsw.edu.au)) if you have any questions. If you would like a copy of the complete timetable just ask your School/Centre/Institute postdoctoral advisory committee member.

## 2011 NSW Young Tall Poppy Science Awards

The Tall Poppy Campaign was created in 1998 by the Australian Institute of Policy and Science (AIPS) to recognise and celebrate Australian intellectual and scientific excellence and to encourage younger Australians to follow in the footsteps of our outstanding achievers. The Young Tall Poppy Science Awards recognise both excellence in research and excellence in science outreach and engagement. These awards are designed for young researchers who are 35 years of age or less\*, who have produced strong research results (published in the peer reviewed literature), and have actively communicated their work beyond their academic discipline via outreach activities.

(\* - extenuating circumstances relating to genuine career interruption can be sought for candidates up to 37 years of age)

<http://www.aips.net.au/tall-poppies/tall-poppy-campaign/>

If you are interested in being nominated or nominating a UNSW staff member for this award please contact Paul Ashworth for detailed assistance [p.ashworth@unsw.edu.au](mailto:p.ashworth@unsw.edu.au)

## UNSW Inventor of the year Awards



Entries for the [2011 UNSW Inventor of the Year Awards](#) are now open.


The UNSW Inventor of the Year Awards recognise and reward inventors that are making the world a better place. Boasting a total cash prize pool of **\$28,000**, the awards are open to UNSW academics and students who are commercialising their research with NewSouth Innovations, the university's commercialisation company.

Please visit the competition web site for further details and application forms.

<http://www.unswinventorawards.com.au/>

Don't forget the new Best New Invention and Student Inventor of the Year categories.  
The competition closes on **13<sup>th</sup> May 2011**

***PLEASE forward to your colleagues and students at UNSW***

 Forward to a Friend

Dr Steve Brodie  
on behalf of the IOY 2011 team at NewSouth Innovations

## Publication of the Month

The School of Medical Sciences Paper of the Month : Jeanie Chui, Minas Coroneo, Lien Tat, Roger Crouch, Denis Wakefield, and Nick Di Girolamo, "Ophthalmic Pterygium A Stem Cell Disorder with Premalignant Features", *The American Journal of Pathology*, 178 (2): 817–27.

## Office of Medical Research has moved!

We have moved to the 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Lowy Building (C27) -

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