

discovery

FEATURES

***Research improves
long-term health
for kids with heart disease**

***Kay & Burton supports
child health research**





DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Professor Terry Dwyer AO MD MPH

I have just returned from an exciting meeting at the National Cancer Institute in Maryland, USA. This was organised to discuss support for a global study of close to one million babies in more than ten countries focusing on the causes of childhood cancer.

Representatives from China were centrally involved in discussions as the Chinese are planning a study of 300,000 mothers and babies as part of this consortium. It now seems likely that this huge and exciting effort will go ahead with MCRI playing an important role. I will report further on developments as they occur.

In news closer to home, the redevelopment of the campus is well under way with much activity happening on the building site adjacent to the hospital. MCRI staff are currently being consulted and will have ongoing input into the design to ensure a world class facility for our researchers in 2011.

MCRI has recently completed formulation of a new institute strategic plan to identify goals for research investment and to guide the direction of our research over the next five years.

Four major areas were identified as research priorities: obesity & diabetes; immune disorders & allergy; brain & mind development; genetics, development & disease. These areas offer opportunities for our researchers to team up



to use their skills and resources to create the best outcomes for children. The rate of problems for children in these areas is steadily increasing and urgently need to be addressed.

We are pleased to announce a new partnership with real estate agency Kay & Burton (for more details see page 6). This exciting new initiative will see the institute widely promoted and I sincerely thank Michael Gibson and the other directors for their commitment to child health.

And a special thank you goes out to all those who supported The Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal. This year a record \$12.4 million was raised, with a portion of the funds directed to research at MCRI.

**Professor Terry Dwyer AO MD MPH
Director**

DONOR PROFILE

Hunter Weeden's Bar Mitzvah wish

After seeing Sarah Murdoch in a TV commercial promoting MCRI's FOXTEL Lap fundraising event, 13 year old Hunter Weeden was inspired to support the institute.

When organising his Bar Mitzvah, Hunter decided that he'd like to ask guests to donate to MCRI rather than give gifts.

"It's always nice to get presents" Hunter said, "but it's much nicer to give to charity."

Hunter and his mum, Gaye, also attended a Discovery tour to learn more about the institute's life saving research before the big celebration.

"I was so proud of Hunter, it's great that he realises it feels good to give. I think it's an important lesson for the next generation to learn," said his mother Gaye.

Hunter's friends and family responded generously to his wish and collectively raised more than \$11,000 for the institute.

Hunter, who is currently in Year 7 at Geelong Grammar School, would like to be a film director when he finishes school.

If you have a celebration coming up, whether it be a Bar Mitzvah, birthday, wedding, house warming or special anniversary, please consider asking guests to make donations to MCRI in lieu of gifts. We can happily provide special donation slips. For more information please phone (03) 8341 6362.

Disclaimer: The Murdoch Childrens Research Institute is named after our Patron and founding donor Dame Elisabeth Murdoch AC DBE. However Murdoch University in Perth is named after another prominent Australian, English professor Sir Walter Murdoch (1874-1970) who although no relation, was also renowned for his humanity. Murdoch University is engaged in, amongst other things, world class medical research.



Thank you

February – April 2008 (\$500 or more)

Thanks to our major supporters

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- Thierry B Galleries
- Patrick Upfold
- Vue De Monde
- Samantha Wagner
- Wiggles
- Wyeth Australia
- Zazu African Drumming
- Estate of Elma Mavis Robertson



END OF FINANCIAL YEAR APPEAL

Invest in the future health of our children

A child's life is priceless. Please help us continue to make life saving medical discoveries by making a tax deductible donation before the end of this financial year.

With your support MCRI can further research into conditions such as diabetes, obesity, depression and premature birth. Together we can help children live happier and healthier lives.

To make a donation, please fill out the donation form at the back of the newsletter.

Sarah Murdoch
Ambassador





New group welcomed to lead exciting research

MCRI welcomes the Stem Cell Epigenetics Group, lead by Professor Jeffrey Mann who joins us from The University of Melbourne. The group will study reproductive stem cells, the development of which can seriously affect both embryonic and childhood health.

Child development depends on the growth of healthy reproductive stem cells. Stem, or 'germ' cells, develop into eggs and sperm and as they grow they rebuild to form a new embryo. The group aims to find out more about how and why reproductive stem cells undergo a large scale rebuilding phase, and the effects this can have on germ cells and embryo development.

INFECTION, IMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT

Researcher Profile

MCRI is excited to welcome population geneticist Dr Justine Ellis, who is searching for genes that cause common complex childhood diseases.

"Research in this area is difficult as lots of genes and environmental factors have an impact on a disease, but can be disguised by so many other things," says Dr Ellis.

She is leading a study into juvenile arthritis, and is hoping to discover the genetic and environmental causes of this disease.

Dr Ellis is also contributing to a study of Type 1 diabetes, studies of adolescent health problems, and a large scale genetic analysis of speech and language disorders.

Her first year has been spent applying for grants, resulting in internal grants of almost \$130K, plus three philanthropic grants including one from Arthritis Australia. Dr Ellis balances a challenging full time work life with a young family.

Dr Justine Ellis with her two children



CRITICAL CARE & NEUROSCIENCES

Improvements in heart surgery mean longer, healthier lives for kids

Heart disease is the leading killer of Australian children and the number one cause of admission of our kids to intensive care.

Thanks to improved palliative surgical procedures, kids suffering from complex congenital heart defects can now expect to live longer, have a better quality of life and even enjoy some physical activity.

Experts from across the globe – including Belgium, Paris, England, Vietnam, Spain, Malaysia and Indonesia – came together to establish the best surgical methods for children with complex congenital heart defects. The international team was led by RCH consultant cardiac surgeon and MCRI research fellow, A/Professor Yves d'Udekem.

"Doctors used to just focus on the survival of children, but it is much more than that. Now our focus is on good long-term outcomes," he said. The research was published in top international cardiology journal, Circulation.

Heart surgery patient Jaymes, 16 years after his operation.



HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

A popular new approach reduces abusive parenting

The 'Toddlers Without Tears' parenting program is designed to guide parents and shape parenting practices, in order to avoid harsh discipline thought to cause behavioural problems in children.

A trial conducted over six areas in Victoria found that families in the program refrained from using harsh discipline, such as yelling and smacking of their toddlers. Results were published in the British Medical Journal.

Dr Jordana Bayer says that the program focuses on positive reinforcement. "Often, too much attention is given to the negative aspects of children's behaviour, and we forget to pay attention to the good behaviour that we do want to see," she said.

Further research is underway to see whether the program can be effective at shaping children's behaviour over time, thus reducing public health problems including crime, drug abuse and depression.



Congratulations

Jim Buttery and his team have been awarded a grant of \$39,800 from the **Jack Brockhoff Foundation**. The grant will fund a study to investigate the response of the new Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine on patients with chronic medical conditions, such as cancer, inflammatory bowel disease and juvenile rheumatoid arthritis.

Thank you to the Jack Brockhoff Foundation for its continued and generous support.

MCRI NEWS

Employer of Choice for Women

MCRI has again been awarded 'Employer of Choice for Women' by the Equal Opportunity for Women Agency for the fifth year running and is one of only 30 organisations in Victoria to be selected.

Human Resources manager Kathryn Bellion, says MCRI offers great benefits such as paid maternity leave, career development and on-site crèche facilities. "We have a flexible work policy, parental leave guidelines and a great ratio of females to males in senior positions, including on our board."

Congratulations to all staff, particularly Kathryn Bellion and her team, who actively endorse a positive and inclusive workplace environment to help all employees be successful.



A/Professor Katie Allen & family





HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

MCRI research makes the top ten again

MCRI research has been included in the NHMRC's publication '10 of the best' for the fourth time in the last three years, the most a research institute or university has ever been recognised.

A/Professor Melissa Wake's research into obesity will appear in the publication this year. Looking at activity patterns and health in 4 year-olds, the study sparked both national and international interest when it found that a father's parenting techniques can be a risk factor for obesity.

Previously recognised in the '10 of the best' series, which highlights successful NHMRC funded research, was Professor Jonathan Carapetis' research into the cost of the common sore throat, Professor George Patton's work into understanding the causes of adolescent health problems and Professor Martin Delatycki's research into genetic screening for haemochromatosis.



INFECTION, IMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT

Environmental factors lower risk of Multiple Sclerosis

Both sun exposure and having younger siblings can affect the risk of developing Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

"Children who have higher contact with siblings under the age of two, in the first six years of their life, have a lower risk of MS. They also have a reduced risk of glandular fever and have high antibodies for the Epstein-Barr virus, both of which have been linked to subsequent cases of MS," says Professor Anne-Louise Ponsonby.

Studies found that reduced sun exposure during childhood and early adolescence was associated with higher MS risk, and will now investigate whether low vitamin D, predominantly generated from sunlight exposure, relates to higher disability levels amongst MS sufferers. Researchers are also now investigating whether the affect of low sun exposure differs amongst those with different genetic make-up.

"It will be interesting to see whether sun exposure recommendations differ for children with different skin pigment types," says Professor Ponsonby.

Results of the studies appeared in the journal of the American Medical Association, the British Medical Journal, and the Journal of Neurology.

Open TV golf day raises \$70,000

Braving the coldest Sydney April morning on record, more than 80 golfing enthusiasts teed off at the spectacular Mona Vale Golf Club for the annual Open TV golf day on Tuesday 30 April 2008.

Sincere thanks to Open TV for hosting the event and to the sponsors Austar, FOXTEL, Irdeto, Pace and UEC. An incredible \$70,000 was raised for MCRI research.

MCRI NEWS

Partnership launched with Kay & Burton

MCRI is proud to announce a three year partnership with leading Melbourne real estate agency, Kay & Burton.

The innovative, best practice and mutually beneficial partnership will help to increase the institute's community awareness as well as provide significant funding for our important child health research.

"The health of your children is paramount which is why Kay & Burton is proud to partner the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute. Together we are looking after your most loved assets," said Kay & Burton Director Michael Gibson.

"Our partnership with Kay & Burton will allow us to seed fund important new research to address the big issues currently affecting Australian children including premature birth, allergies, obesity, cancer, diabetes and mental health" said MCRI Director Professor Terry Dwyer.

Staff from Kay & Burton attended a special Discovery tour to see first hand the life saving child health research that is conducted.



Kay & Burton Managing Director Michael Gibson with daughters Charlotte & Mimi



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 11 July 2008
Director's lunch
12.30 – 2.00pm

Thursday 7 August 2008
Discovery Tour
5.00 – 7.00pm

DISCOVERY
Editors: Helen Rolfe & Sam Cain

Kay & Burton Executive Chairman Gerald Delany & MCRI Chairman Laurie Cox



A/Professor David Thorburn with Kay & Burton's Sam Wilkinson

MCRI NEWS

Development board welcomes Dahlia Sable

The development board welcomes Dahlia Sable, a lawyer who has worked for Cornwall Stodart lawyers and more recently for the Spotlight Group. She has been actively involved in the community through participating in youth leadership and drug education programs as well as supporting other charitable organisations. Dahlia has a Monash bachelors degree in Law and Commerce as well as a diploma of Italian language which she completed in Perugia, Italy in 2002.

"After our daughter was born 8 weeks premature, I began to really understand the importance of the work and research that was involved in nursing these precious babies back to health. After bringing her home safely, I wanted to put my energy into the MCRI as they make these miracles occur everyday for many families like ours. Without the community support, this would not be possible," she said.



I support a healthier future for children.

Name _____

Address _____

Suburb _____ State _____ Postcode _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

Email _____



YES! I would like to make a donation of \$_____ to life saving child health research

Please find my cheque attached or

I authorise a single deduction from my credit card

Mastercard Visa Bank Card Diners

AMEX Security code _____ (AMEX only)

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Call 1300 766 439 to make a credit card donation by phone.

Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

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Improving child health takes common cents.

90 cents of every dollar goes directly to life saving research at the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute.

So every dollar you donate makes a difference. Help us discover innovative ways to prevent and treat conditions affecting children including allergies, asthma, cancer, cerebral palsy, obesity, genetic conditions and premature birth.

Our discoveries will help ensure children lead happier, healthier lives.



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HOW MUCH IS YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH WORTH?

As parents, we know our child's health is priceless. Which is why research into premature birth, asthma, allergies, obesity and depression at the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute is so important. Join me in supporting the Institute, because with your donations we can continue to discover cures. It's a small price to pay for your child's health.

Donate today by visiting www.mcric.edu.au or call 1300 766 439.

Sarah Sarah Murdoch, Ambassador.

DONATE TODAY



**Murdoch Childrens
Research Institute**

Healthier Kids. Healthier Future.