

Priceless



IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES

The news bulletin for supporters of the Clifford Craig Foundation

Research excellence recognised



In its 30th anniversary year the Clifford Craig Foundation will provide a record funding commitment of almost \$900,000 for the provision of medical research, equipment and education for Tasmania's North and North-West.

Last month Foundation Chairman Associate Professor Don McTaggart announced the recipients of our 2022 medical research grants.

They include a world-first trial examining the immune response to COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant women and the effects of Ketamine on post-traumatic stress disorder.

Two inaugural early career scholarships aimed at supporting up and coming clinicians with translational research have also been awarded, along with additional funding of \$183,565 for two existing projects currently underway at the Launceston General Hospital.

Associate Professor McTaggart said the community should take great pride in knowing that because of their ongoing support, the Foundation is able to assist with the delivery of world-class research projects such as this.

"These projects will further enhance the Foundation's vision for the Launceston General Hospital to be recognised nationally as a centre of research excellence," he said.

"Further, through these scholarships we are now helping the next generation of Tasmanian researchers get their start in the field of medical research."

2022 Medical Research Grants:

- COVID-19 vaccination of vulnerable populations – Professor Katie Flanagan – \$360,000
- Effects of ketamine on pain outcomes, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress – Associate Professor Luke Johnson – \$80,000
- Evaluating the role of endothelial to mesenchymal transition in the pathogenesis of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and pulmonary hypertension – Dr Sukhwinder Sohal – \$80,000
- Pancreatitis in Tasmania: Quantifying the epidemiological and economic burden of disease – Professor Richard Turner – \$24,974

Early Career Research Scholarships:

- Improving patient outcomes in disease of the gut-bowel preparation - Emma Szyzman - \$12,500
- Reducing antipsychotic use in dementia through pharmacist-led intervention - Jessica Spokes - \$12,500

Additional funding:

- Effect of photo modulation on Cardiac and Inflammatory Bio-markers after Percutaneous Coronary Intervention – Dr Rohit Barthwal and Dr Michael Fox – \$149,600
- Improving Bariatric Surgery Outcomes – Dr John Mercer – \$33,965

IN THIS EDITION

- A message from the CEO
- 2022 Medical Research Grants
- Early Career Research Scholarships
- Christmas Appeal update
- Hospital Rounds
- International Women's Day Luncheon success

From the CEO



2022 is a milestone year for the Clifford Craig Foundation as we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the organisation.

As many people would understand and appreciate, the operational

activity of a busy not-for-profit business is constant, especially with a small administration team. However, as a CEO it is important to sometimes take a moment to “stop and smell the roses” and reflect upon the achievements of the Foundation during its first 30 years.

It’s during these moments that I cherish the people that had the vision and passion to establish the Clifford Craig Foundation back in the early 1990s. People such as our founding Chairman Dr John Morris, inaugural executive officer Toni Maloney and recognised health community leaders Laurie Wing, Anne O’Byrne and Ros O’Connor were the driving force behind the initiative. Along with many other enthusiastic business and community leaders, they create a community Foundation for the LGH which would advance healthcare for the people of Northern Tasmania.

Just a few weeks ago the success of their vision was on full display when we announced the 2022 funding grants of nearly \$900,000 for the areas of medical research, health education scholarships and the purchase of specialist equipment to assist with the treatment of Barrett’s Oesophagus.

Anne and Ros continue to maintain their close connection with the Foundation as Patrons. Unfortunately, Dr John, Toni and Laurie are no longer with us, but I am sure they are watching from above with immense pride.

We now turn our attention to the next 30 years and look forward to further advancing the activities of the Foundation to support the health initiatives for population of northern half of Tasmania.

Peter Milne
Chief Executive

Immune response trial a ‘world-first’

COVID-19 vaccination of vulnerable populations – Head of Infectious Diseases Professor Professor Katie Flanagan – \$360,000

Launceston General Hospital’s Head of Infectious Diseases Professor Katie Flanagan has been at the forefront of Australia’s COVID-19 response through both research and as a member of the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation. Now she will lead a world-first trial examining the immune response to COVID-19 vaccines in vulnerable populations, including pregnant women, thanks to \$360,000 in funding from the Clifford Craig Foundation.



In what represents the most significant individual medical research funding commitment in the Foundation’s 30-year history, the COVULPOP trial will quantify and compare vaccine-induced humoral and cellular immune responses to COVID-19 vaccination between pregnant women, the elderly, healthy adult men and non-pregnant women.

It will be the first study to use Systems Vaccinology to study COVID-19 vaccine responses in pregnant women and the elderly, and the first to investigate the link between vaccine responses diet, microbiota inflammation, immunity and mood disorders.

Professor Flanagan will carry out the study in Tasmania, in partnership with the University of Tasmania’s School of Health Sciences, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Monash University and the Peter Doherty Institute.

The study will bring together a team of researchers already publishing cutting edge research in the field of SARS-CoV-2 immunology and is expected to generate unprecedented insights into the immunological effects of COVID-19 vaccines.

As Professor Flanagan explained, while multiple vaccines have been approved based on data indicating they are safe and protect against COVID-19, our understanding of their effects in pregnant women and the very elderly – two groups at increased risk of developing severe COVID-19 – are less robust.

“Currently, we have limited data on responses to COVID-19 vaccination in pregnant women,” Professor Flanagan said.

“As we move towards living with SARS-CoV-2, we are likely to need regular boosters, particularly against emerging virus variants of concern.

“Women may therefore need to receive a booster COVID-19 vaccination during their pregnancy.

“We don’t know how long vaccine-induced immunity will last following COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy nor the efficiency of transfer of protective antibodies to the foetus.

“It is therefore imperative to answer these questions for future COVID-19 vaccine programming.”

The trial will require up to 200 pregnant women, 120 young adults aged 18-45, and 120 older adults aged 65 and older. Healthy pregnant women will be recruited via their obstetric clinic early in their pregnancy, while healthy men, non-pregnant women and elderly patients will be recruited from the LGH and the Launceston Medical Centre.



IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES

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Proudly assisting the Clifford Craig Foundation

Further uses for an established drug

Effects of ketamine on pain outcomes, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress: pain treatment experience and patient perceptions – Associate Professor Luke Johnson – \$80,000



Northern Tasmania has a long history of medical advances, with the first use of an anaesthetic drug in Australia (ether) performed in Launceston in the 1880s.

Now, a new research project led by Associate Professor Luke Johnson will examine if ketamine affects the

psychological outcomes of pain, and also what people know and think about being treated with the anaesthetic agent.

Almost 1 in 5 Australians aged 45 and over are living with chronic pain. The conditions are common and serious and around half of patients also experience depression or anxiety.

However, existing treatment solutions are very limited.

Ketamine is a drug that affects brain signalling and has been safely used as an aesthetic agent and for the treatment of pain for about the last 50 years.

At low doses ketamine can have temporary effects on how memories are perceived and re-remembered and it has the potential to be used in conjunction with psychiatry talk therapies to help treat and prevent future psychological distress in patients with pain.

This project will help establish important initial clinical data at the Launceston General Hospital and Tasmania's North-West, while investigating further uses of an established drug to help treat mental health conditions related to pain.

Associate Professor Johnson is an Academic Lead at the University of Tasmania's School of Psychological Sciences.

Painting a 'disease burden' picture

Pancreatitis in Tasmania: Quantifying the epidemiological and economic burden of disease – Professor Richard Turner – \$24,974



This project marks the first study in Australia, and possibly the world, to explore the epidemiology and health economic implications of pancreatitis at a state or regional level. Addressing an area of high need in Tasmania's North and North-West, it will explore

quality improvement for patient care and health service delivery, partnerships between academics and health service providers and an innovative approach for measuring disease burden.

The pancreas is a gland organ that produces insulin and other important enzymes and hormones that help break down foods. Acute pancreatitis (AP), recurrent AP, and chronic pancreatitis (CP) represent a spectrum of disease involving the exocrine pancreas whereby inappropriate intra-parenchymal activation of digestive

enzymes may lead to a systemic inflammatory response, local tissue injury and, over time, progressive, irreversible fibrosis. Consequences range from chronic pain, malabsorption, diabetes and death.

This project will enable state-wide hospital and pathology data to be linked to provide a researchable dataset of Tasmanian pancreatitis cases from 2007-2018. A comprehensive picture will be obtained for disease burden pertaining to epidemiology, resource utilisation, established guideline compliance, and the determinants of these.

The results will inform future quality improvement strategies. At a national level, this study will inform similar studies to be undertaken in other Australian states which, by five years, will result in a 'national' picture of the disease burden of pancreatitis and lead to optimal disease management policies across the country.

Professor Turner is a Professor of Surgery with the University of Tasmania's School of Medicine.



The early pathology of IPF

Evaluating the role of endothelial to mesenchymal transition in the pathogenesis of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and pulmonary hypertension – Dr Sukhwinder Sohal – \$80,000



IPF is a relatively common and devastating lung disease most commonly found in those aged over 50. There is no cure, with an average survival rate of just three years. IPF patients are increasingly prone to abnormal structural changes in the pulmonary arteries, leading to the development of pulmonary hypertension (PH).

The goal of this research project is to better understand the early pathology of IPF and its driving mechanisms. Understanding this will enable health professionals to diagnose IPF earlier, and more accurately, leading to significant therapeutic implications.

Specifically, this study aims to determine how the process of the endothelial-to-mesenchymal transition (EndMT) contributes to pulmonary hypertension and fibrogenesis in IPF.

Recent research led by Dr Sohal, also funded by the Clifford Craig Foundation, indicates EndMT is one of the fundamental pathological mechanisms that leads to increase in myofibroblasts and fibrotic destruction of the lung tissue.

This project will also compare the findings to other chronic respiratory diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) to understand differences in pathology of varying diseases of the same organ. Lessons learned in IPF will also be applicable to other disease models.

Dr Sohal is a senior lecturer at the University of Tasmania and is currently leading the Respiratory Translational Research Group at the UTAS' School of Health Sciences in Launceston.



Funding extensions announced



In 2022 the Clifford Craig Foundation has granted extra funding towards 2 projects currently being undertaken at the LGH.

Laser effect on cardiac inflammatory markers - Dr Rohit Barthwal and Dr Michael Fox - \$149,600

Cardiovascular disease is still the single greatest cause of mortality in Australia. There are more than 50,000 heart attacks in Australia each year and over 40,000 Australians die from cardiovascular disease annually.

Currently, patients who present with a heart attack or who are at-risk of a heart attack would normally have a stent inserted into the arteries of the heart to fix the blockage. The sudden return of blood to an area of the heart that has not been receiving blood flow previously can cause damage itself. This damage can be measured by rises in a blood protein called troponin, a biomarker that indicates heart muscle damage.

This project is a simple novel approach to see if preconditioning the patient by use of laser therapy can reduce cardiac damage shown as a rise in troponin. The project will use low level laser applied through the skin to see if the damage to the heart can be reduced when a stent is inserted.

Improving Bariatric Surgery Outcomes - Dr John Mercer - \$33,965

Obesity is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon which overlaps physiological, dietetic and psychological domains. Surgery to assist with weight loss is increasingly performed in Australia, however not all have good outcomes.

This study aims to determine whether eating styles (emotional, external and restrained) are a factor which can be used to reliably predict post-surgical outcomes. If eating styles can predict weight loss and psycho-dietetic adjustment outcomes after Bariatric surgery, they could be factored into the pre-surgical assessment process. This could identify people for whom Bariatric surgery may have been predictably poor post-surgical outcomes, thereby reducing the number and cost of unnecessary surgeries, surgery reversals, and/or other adverse reactions and dietetic outcomes.

Hospital Rounds

Every Tuesday the Clifford Craig Foundation helps facilitate Medical Grand Rounds at the Launceston General Hospital, in partnership with the Department of Medicine.

Recently it was LGH neurologist and Clifford Craig Foundation-supported researcher Dr Matt Lee-Archer's turn to present.

Dr Lee-Archer shared insights from three recent cases he had consulted on, as examples of when neurologists are asked to care for complex cancer patients.

In what was heralded as one of the most engaging Grand Rounds ever hosted by the hospital, we caught up with Dr Lee-Archer to find out more about the important form of medical education.

Q: Why did you choose this topic?

A: I picked the topic because it highlighted how patients with complex problems get the best care when expert teams work together. There were many specialty teams involved in the cases I discussed, including oncology, haematology, ophthalmology, radiation oncology, neurosurgery, radiology, pathology, general medicine and of course, neurology!

Q: Why are Grand Rounds such a valuable tool for doctors?

A: Grand Rounds is a way that we share knowledge in a supportive, collegiate environment. It benefits all clinicians and subsequently all the patients we treat.

Dr Lee-Archer was also joined by Local Medical Registrar Alex Trimble, who presented the week's Hot Case on "Manoj's Mystery Myopathy".





Scholarship success



Scholarship recipients Jessica Spokes and Emma Szyzman with Harvey and Sue Cuthill.

In 2021 the Clifford Craig Foundation extended its commitment to research education at the Launceston General Hospital through an Introduction to Research Course.

Commencing in April and led by gastroenterologist Professor Nicholas Shackel, the six-week course was designed to provide clinicians in medicine, nursing and allied health with the skills to undertake their own medical research projects.

Through this, and thanks to the philanthropic support of the Cuthill Family Foundation, participants were encouraged to apply for two Early Career Research Scholarships.

Worth \$12,500 each, the scholarships are aimed at supporting up-and-coming clinicians with translational research projects.

We are now thrilled to introduce the two recipients of these scholarships: LGH Nurse Emma Szyzman and pharmacist Jessica Spokes.

Reducing antipsychotic use in dementia through pharmacist-led intervention - Jessica Spokes - \$12,500

Dementia is estimated to effect up to 436,000 Australians and is the leading cause of death nationwide. Behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) are often triggered during hospital admission. Many symptoms of BPSD such as wandering and calling out are unlikely to respond to antipsychotic medications. The only means by which an antipsychotic may have efficacy in this case is by sedating the patient, which constitutes inappropriate restraint. Risperidone is the only antipsychotic indicated for use in dementia in Australia, however studies have shown only an 8% decrease in behaviour severity.

Only one trial has investigated the possibility of reducing antipsychotic use in Australian hospitals, however this did

not assess the frequency of behaviours, cost-effectiveness, or reductions in lengths of stay. This study aims to investigate these gaps in the literature to assess the feasibility of a Geriatric Antipsychotic Stewardship (GAPs) Pharmacist to encourage de-escalation of antipsychotic medications in patients with dementia.

It will be the first in Australia to examine the 6-month feasibility of antipsychotic stewardship on improving patient outcomes and reducing adverse effects, length of stay and the associated costs.

Improving patient outcomes in disease of the gut-bowel preparation - Emma Szyzman - \$12,500

While colonoscopy remains the preferred 'gold standard' screening strategy for bowel cancer, poor preparation of the bowel prior to a screening often means the bowel is not clear enough for a doctor to carry out a thorough inspection. At the LGH about 50 colonoscopies are performed each week. However, it is estimated that adequate bowel preparation is only seen in between 60-70% of cases. Considered annually, this means

up to 780 colonoscopies need to be repeated each year - an annual cost of at least \$878,000.

This research project will examine the variables and clinical variations associated with inadequate bowel preparations. It is hoped that by better understanding why patients are having inadequate bowel preparations, health professionals can address the problems identified to deliver more efficient, safer and a higher standard of gastroenterology healthcare to patients. This includes improved patient outcomes, satisfaction and reduced costs.

“To be given the opportunity to do much-needed research such as this, and to have this research supported by an organisation such as Clifford Craig is a great feeling and a great motivator for myself and future researchers.”

- Scholarship recipient,
Jessica Spokes

For the Diary

Women's Health 'Living Better, Living Longer' Brunch

- featuring Professor Cassandra Szoeké

When: Thursday, 21st April
Where: Country Club Tasmania
Bookings: On sale now through the Foundation office - 6777 6010 or www.cliffordcraig.org.au

Clifford Craig Foundation 30th Anniversary Charity Ball - "Mamma Mia"

When: Friday, 3rd June
Back by popular demand, this year's ball theme will be 'Mamma Mia', featuring Australia's number one Abba tribute band Babba, and Encore Theatre Company.

Where: Hotel Grand Chancellor
Bookings: Foundation Office - 6777 6010 or www.cliffordcraig.org.au

CLIFFORD CRAIG FOUNDATION
30TH ANNIVERSARY CHARITY BALL

MAMMA MIA!

Ladies Day Out

When: Saturday, 3rd September
Where: Country Club Tasmania

Run & Walk for your Heart

When: Sunday, 2nd October
Where: UTAS Stadium Precinct



Are you following us on social media?

Stay up to date with the all the latest news and highlights from the Clifford Craig Foundation online via Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn @cliffordcraigfoundation.

HALO on its way

Late last year we asked for your help in securing a life-saving piece of medical equipment for the Launceston General Hospital.

Now we are pleased to announce that our Christmas Appeal to purchase a HALO Radiofrequency Ablation System for the hospital's Gastroenterology Department has exceeded the fundraising goal of \$50,000.

Used to treat precancerous cells in the oesophagus, we know this piece of medical equipment is going to make a huge difference to Tasmanians in need.

We look forward to providing you with more updates on this exciting development.



We want to hear from you!

Have you taken part in one of our innovative medical research projects? Perhaps you've benefited from a piece of equipment the Foundation has secured for the Launceston General Hospital? Maybe you're a long-time volunteer with the Friends of Clifford Craig?

If you have a story to share, or a message of support for the Foundation, we'd love to hear from you! To learn how you can be a part of our 30th anniversary celebrations, email admin@cliffordcraig.org.au or give us a call on 6777 6010.



International Women's Day Luncheon

The efforts of Northern Tasmania's frontline health staff throughout the pandemic were recognised at our recent Clifford Craig Foundation annual International Women's Day Luncheon.

A sold-out crowd of more than 230 guests filled the Ball Room at Country Club Tasmania on March 2 to hear from guest speaker, Tasmania's Governor Barbara Baker AC.

Her Excellency was joined by "Local Hero" – Tasmanian Health Service Nursing Director Primary Health North Fiona Young – who also shared her insights on the state's response to COVID-19, as part of a Q&A hosted by event MC Sara Redman.

Ms Young was "humbled" to have been asked to speak at the event, but said she was there to represent all women in the Tasmanian Health Service after a difficult few years.

"I think it really does evidence how well we have functioned at an organisational level, and how flexible we are and we need to be," she said.

"I am really honoured. I am really, really proud to work in our health service.

"And I feel humbled, I do think it's really important to recognise everyone in our health service. So this is for our health service."

Now in its 14th year, the IWD luncheon celebrates the achievements of women in our community and around the world, while raising funds in support of the Launceston General Hospital.



Welcome to our new Board members

The Clifford Craig Foundation Board of Directors recently welcomed four new members: Kylie Leavitt, Sarah Percy-Dove, Bernard Wahlin and Associate Professor Tim Strong.

Kylie, Sarah and Bernard joined us in October last year and bring with them significant experience in the fields of finance and investment. Tim joined the board in February and is also the Director of the UTAS' Launceston Clinical School.

Our Foundation remains incredibly grateful for the leadership and expertise offered by all of our voluntary Board of Directors, who are charged with making policy and exercising fiduciary responsibility for the organisation.



Sarah Percy-Dove



Kylie Leavitt



Associate Professor Tim Strong



Bernard Wahlin

New Education and Research Precinct

Last year the state government finalised its masterplan for the Launceston General Hospital.

As the acute referral hospital for Tasmania's North and North-West, this represents a significant roadmap for the future of health service delivery in our state.

This includes medical research, with the Tasmanian Health Service recently confirming early investigations have commenced to relocate the Clifford Craig Foundation into Level One of the Northern Integrated Care Building, as part of a new Education and Research Precinct.

Future updates will be provided and consultation with staff will occur as the design process progresses.

The state government has committed \$580 million over 10 years towards the masterplan development, which also includes a new mental health precinct and an in-patient unit designed for the care of the elderly.



HEALTHY EATING RECIPE Pumpkin soup



A perfect Autumn meal, enjoy this soup with some fresh Tasmanian pumpkin as the weather starts to cool down.

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 1 leek, pale section only, sliced
- 500g pumpkin, peeled, chopped
- 350g sweet potato, peeled, chopped
- Canola oil spray
- 2 cloves of garlic, crushed
- 3 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 litre (4 cups) vegetable stock
- 1 x 400g can kidney beans, drained and well rinsed
- 1/3 cup flat leaf parsley, chopped,

Method:

1. Spray vegies with oil. Heat a large heavy-based saucepan over moderate heat. Cook and stir leek for 2 minutes. Add remaining vegies and garlic. Cook and stir for 2 minutes until well combined.
2. Add cumin. Cook and stir for 30 seconds or until fragrant. Stir in stock and bring to the boil. Reduce heat, simmer for 25 minutes or until vegies are tender. Cool slightly.
3. Process pumpkin mixture in batches until smooth. Place soup in a clean pan. Add beans, cook and stir over low heat for 3-4 minutes or until hot.
4. Ladle hot soup into bowls, top with chopped parsley and enjoy!



Research saves lives.

Help us to help you and your loved ones.

100% of your donation **remains in Tasmania** and is used for medical research or the specified area of need in our community.

Donate today.

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