

# Partners

PA Research Foundation Newsletter Issue 2 - 2010



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# Curing cancer could be as easy as ABC

Scientists investigating the possibility that breast cancer could be a virus, are today closer to realising their dream thanks to the generosity of the Australian Leisure and Hospitality Group (ALH).

Pubs across Queensland pledged their Friday nights to fundraise for the PA Research Foundation to support breakthrough breast cancer research projects at the PA.

On Wednesday 18 August the ALH handed over a remarkable fundraising effort of \$236,000 which will allow several breast cancer projects to move forward. This includes a very special investigation into the ABC cancer cluster, which can now be taken to a new level.

Dr Glenn Francis and his team are investigating if cancer can be a virus using tissue samples collected from the women affected by what is now referred to as the ABC cancer cluster.

This mystery cluster affected 16 women from the same workplace – the majority were young with no family history of the disease and no environmental cause was found for the illness.

The virus theory investigation is a controversial idea with early results showing the women all had the mouse mammary tumour virus.

"We don't know what this means and the implications of it," Dr Francis said.

"There are a number of differing scientific beliefs about the significance of this.



"We now need to look more closely at these results. Often researchers know what they are looking for and conduct tests to see if they are right.

"We are working in reverse, we don't know exactly what we are looking for so we need to look for other things and see if we can answer those questions.

"The funds raised by the ALH group will now mean we can buy a specialist piece of equipment allowing us to look more closely at the breast cancer tissue samples we have collected."

PA Research Foundation Nicholas Allen said this study was just one of the many research projects the Foundation financially supported.

"We are the home to the cervical cancer vaccine so we have a proven track record that our researchers achieve results," Mr Allen said.

"Sadly there are more than 6 worthy breast cancer research projects than we can support, but this money raised will help us significantly with at least 3 projects. So money raised like this is just wonderful."

The PA Research Foundation, PA Breast Cancer Researchers and the many breast cancer patients and their families are grateful to all ALH venues, staff members and supporters who have achieved this remarkable fundraising in just 1 month.

"We are blown away by the support and generosity of ALH's fundraising achievements.



"I want researchers to find what's causing breast cancer. I want them to find it today. I want them to find it yesterday. I want them to be able to say, "this is what causes it, here's a needle to stop it and no one else will ever have to suffer from it again" That's what I want them to say."

Lisa Backhouse - former ABC news reporter is one of the 16 women who developed breast cancer while working at the ABC Television Studios in Brisbane.

"Thank you to ALH on behalf of everyone who will benefit from this research today and long into the future." Said Mr Allen

A cancer cure is the holy grail of medical research. Finding the cause offers a chance to arrest it and put a stop to the staggering incidence of cancer. 🌱

To support breast cancer research projects visit: [www.pafoundation.org.au](http://www.pafoundation.org.au)



## PA New T-cell treatment the key to Suzannah's happy ending

For most people getting married is the happiest day of their life, but for cancer and kidney disease survivor Suzannah Scott, walking down the aisle this year will be an extraordinary achievement.

Twice in her life, the 24-year-old has been given just days to live.

But thanks to the ingenuity of a PA doctor and researcher and a treatment which had never been used before in Queensland, Ms Scott is set to marry her long-time partner this October.

Ms Scott said she started getting sick from the age of eight and after a number of tests and blood transfusions, was diagnosed with medullary cystic kidney disease.

"My kidneys were filling up with cysts and had basically stopped working. Just before my ninth birthday, the Children's Hospital called my mother and said, 'You've got half an hour to get her here or she might be dead in a couple of hours.'" Ms Scott said



"I was put on dialysis straight away."

Then, in 2002, she received a life-saving kidney transplant at Queensland's transplant centre, PA.

"It was such a relief for everyone when I got the transplant. Halfway through 2003 I was going so well I was allowed to travel to America for five weeks." she said.

But the day after she returned, Ms Scott's life turned upside down for a second time.

"I was playing catch in the backyard and I never miss a ball – except that afternoon, I suddenly got really sick and every time I moved I threw up. I had no idea what was happening."

Ms Scott was ultimately diagnosed with Post Transplant Lymphoma Disease (PTLD), a

## PA "funds" new hope for Rheumatoid Arthritis patient



Professor Ranjery Thomas and her team are one step closer to developing their arthritis vaccine.

PA Research Foundation reaches fundraising goal of \$100,000 thanks to loyal supporters and donors to take Arthritis Research to the next level.

Funds raised from the recent Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) Appeal will purchase a vital piece of equipment to enable Professor Ranjery Thomas and her team to get their clinical trials up and running two years in advance of schedule.

Prof. Thomas heads a team that specifically targets the underlying cause of RA.

"This machine will be of critical assistance to the teams vaccination strategy to prevent RA from starting in patients at high risk of the disease"

"It has taken the team six years to get to this point and the purchase of this machine means that clinical trials will now take place in the next 12 months." Said Prof. Thomas

If successful, this strategy should provide long-term disease suppression with fewer side effects than currently available drugs. 🌟



Happy endings for Suzannah and Associate Professor Maher Gandhi

– unfortunately there wasn't much hope.

"She was unconscious for most of this time, because the lymphoma was pressing on her brain."

At the age of 18, Ms Scott was referred to palliative care.

"They told my family I might only have a few days to live," Ms Scott said.

Dr Gandhi, in Europe at the time, spoke to an Edinburgh research team that was experimenting with a new treatment for cancers that are caused by viruses.

"They were manipulating T-cells to 'kill' the viruses and subsequently the cancer," Dr Gandhi said.

"T-cells are white blood cells that specifically control immunity. When a transplant patient is given immunosuppressant drugs, their natural immunity is depleted and, as in Suzannah's case, can lead to major complications."

"Essentially this new treatment is giving patients back their immunity."

Dr Gandhi returned to Brisbane to suggest the option to other members of Ms Scott's medical team.

"I knew straight away we had to give it a go – we had exhausted all other treatment options, and none had

worked."

Dr Gandhi received an order of the manipulated T-cells from Edinburgh and they were injected into Ms Scott.

"She began to improve the same day. Even more remarkable was that she only needed three further injections of the T-cells and she showed no side effects.

"She woke up from her coma, with the good news that she was in remission." Dr Gandhi said.

Five years on, Ms Scott is now considered cured – and couldn't be more grateful for the work of Dr Gandhi.

"Everyone at PAH has been fantastic though, especially all of the doctors and nurses. I feel like I'm the luckiest person in the world."

Thanks to Dr Gandhi's research and his team at the PA Suzannah will be walking down the aisle to marry the love of her life later this year. 🌈



rare brain cancer.

PA haematologist, Associate Professor Maher Gandhi, said lymphoma in the brain is always particularly difficult to treat.

"We give cancer patients an assessment of zero to four, with four being the worst. Suzannah was given a four

## PA Hospital publishes world-first results in curing melanoma

The PA Hospital has placed Queensland at the forefront of international medicine with a world first in melanoma treatment.

International research conducted over 17 years has become the first of its kind to prove the effectiveness of radiation therapy in curing melanoma.

Radiation Oncology trial director, Dr Bryan Burmeister, said the study had shown a course of radiation therapy after a patient has undergone surgery significantly reduces the recurrence of the disease.

He said the results will benefit patients with melanoma across the globe.

"Our research into the importance of radiation therapy in treating melanoma is particularly important in Queensland, where we experience the highest rate of melanoma in the world," he said.



"Melanoma patients who require lymph node surgery normally have a high risk of recurrence – we've shown that radiation therapy reduces their chance of the disease coming back from 32% to less than 18%."

Dr Burmeister's desire to stop the recurrence in the lymph nodes goes beyond cementing PA Hospital, Brisbane and Queensland as the international leader in melanoma treatment.

"Recurrence of melanoma in the lymph nodes can be extremely disabling with swelling of the arm fungation, bleeding discharge, and pain."

"Improved treatment is about effective prevention of this recurrence through radiation five days a week for four weeks, which is not difficult or painful for the patient."

"PA Hospital has certainly done its bit in proving these results with 45% of participants in the second phase of the study and 40% from the third phase coming through the Radiation Oncology Unit here," he said.

"I'm proud of our 17-year effort in proving that radiation is necessary to successfully treat melanoma." Dr Burmeister said. 🌈

## PA unveils Australian first in prostate cancer fight

A major leap forward in the treatment of advanced prostate cancer was announced last month, with Australasian-first equipment arriving at the PA.

In a major coup for prostate cancer treatment and research in Australia, a brand new Cell-Search circulating tumour cell (CTC) test system has arrived in Brisbane.

CTCs are tumour cells that have detached from solid tumours and entered the patient's blood, possibly leading to the spread of the cancer to other parts of their body.

Queensland University of Technology's (QUT) Chair of Prostate Cancer Professor Nelson said the award-winning equipment will be a national resource for monitoring treatment response and predicting survival in patients with metastatic prostate, breast and colorectal cancer.

PAH Director of Urology Dr Simon Wood said the arrival of this new technology would stimulate a whole range of new research now that circulating tumour cell numbers could be measured.

"This will be particularly relevant for men receiving novel treatment through our multidisciplinary clinic for advanced prostate cancer and clinical trials unit," he said.

"We also hope it will help with decision making in some men with higher risk prostate cancer."

The machine is expected to greatly advance the management of prostate cancer in Queensland men - a disease that affects one in nine men nationally and kills over 3000 Australian men every year.



Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in Australian men and is the second most common cause of cancer deaths in men.

## PA gets quacking for cancer research

"Hi, my name is Quackers. My flock of feathery friends need your support in Australia's Biggest Duck Race for cancer research"



the great  
**BRISBANE  
DUCK  
RACE**

What do 25,000 rubber ducks, a car, \$5000 cash and a race on the Brisbane River all have in common - cancer.

On Sunday 12 September up to 25,000 rubber ducks will flock to the shores of the Brisbane River to take part in a 100m race to raise funds for the PA Research Foundation for cancer research.

To encourage people to get their ducks in the race, valued sponsors Sci-Fleet Toyota are giving away a Toyota Yaris for the first duck to cross the finish line and Bankwest have thrown in \$5000 to feather the nest egg of the 2nd lucky duck home

All you have to do is adopt a duck for \$5 to be in the running. Every ticket purchased matches a numbered rubber duck that will take part in the race.

"There is nothing more rewarding than watching these ducks float down the Brisbane River knowing their aim is to help raise funds for cancer research to help find preventative therapeutics so our future generations will be able to live without this disease." Said Foundation's Nick Allen

One in two men and one in three women will be diagnosed with cancer before the age of 85. Adding to that one out of nine Australian women are diagnosed with breast cancer, one out of nine Australian men are diagnosed with prostate cancer and two out of three Australians are diagnosed with skin cancer.

Please help us change these statistics and buy your duck in the race today. Visit:

[www.greatbrisbaneduckrace.org.au](http://www.greatbrisbaneduckrace.org.au)

or call 07 3176 2359

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[pafoundation.org.au](http://pafoundation.org.au)



## PA Research Foundation pledges \$900,000 for 2010 Research Grants

The Foundation is delighted to announce the opening of the grants for 2010. This year we are proud to be able to give \$900,000 to fund world class research at the PA.

These funds would not have been possible without donations and bequests from individuals and the community. Community fundraising, corporate donations and sponsorships. Events and donations through workplace giving.

These grants will ensure that we can continue to provide the high standard of health care that we enjoy today. They will ensure that our future health and those of the next generation will benefit from new breakthroughs thanks to funds allocated to research this year.

-  Project Grants 2 x \$75,000
-  New Appointment Grant - \$75,000
-  Nursing Allied Health Grant  
3 x \$75,000
-  Private Practice Trust Fund Grants  
8 x \$75,000

### Issue 1 Quiz!

- 1 What is the Great Brisbane Duck Race in aid of?
  - a] Breast Cancer Research
  - b] Skin Cancer Research
  - c] Prostate Cancer Research
  - d] All of the above
- 2 What are T-Cells?
  - a] test tube grown cells
  - b] white blood cells that control immunity
  - c] anti-inflammatory cells
  - d] red blood cells that carry oxygen
- 3 What is the PA a first in?
  - a] Using radiation to cure melanoma
  - b] Purchase of a CTC Cell System
  - c] Developing the world's 1st cancer vaccine
  - d] all of the above
- 4 What is incidence of cancer in Australia?
  - a] 1 in 2 people
  - b] 1 on 5 people
  - c] 1 in 7 people
  - d] 1 in 3 people

THIS ISSUE'S QUIZ ANSWERS: 1 - C, 2 - B, 3 - D, 4 - D

## PA Giving

If you would like to feel a Part of something special, that can make an amazing difference to people's lives, then we would like to invite you to become Part of the PA Giving Program..

The PA Giving Program is a simple and easy way for you to make a significant contribution to help our researchers save lives, in a cost effective manner that results in a tax deduction for you.

The Giving Program allows you to donate regularly on a monthly, by Direct Debit and is one of the very best ways to support and invest in life-saving research. The Giving Program allows us to plan our research

grants for longevity into the future, ensuring that we have the resources and funds to sustain quality research projects.

What is Direct Debit – Direct Debit is a simple way for you to make regular donations from your bank account. With direct debits, you can donate a nominated amount each month or simply indicate a different amount each time that you decide to make a donation. As well as being easy to set up it also costs us less in administration so you can be confident that even more of your donation goes to fund world class research at the PA Hospital.

If you would like to make a nominated donation via Direct Debit simply call the Foundation on 3176 7364 or go online and click on the support us button to download your form.

## Donation Form – Yes, I would like to support health research!

If you wish to make a donation, please fill out and detach the below form and return it postage free to: PA Research Foundation Reply Paid 77401, Woolloongabba QLD 4102, or fax it to (07) 3176 7303. For enquiries, to donate by phone or to organise scheduled donations, please call (07) 3176 2359. For further information on the PA Research Foundation or to make an online donation, go to [pafoundation.org.au](http://pafoundation.org.au).

FIRST NAME	SURNAME	CONTACT NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
STREET	SUBURB	STATE	POST CODE
<input type="checkbox"/> CHEQUE OR MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO THE PA RESEARCH FOUNDATION		<input type="checkbox"/> VISA	<input type="checkbox"/> MASTERCARD
<input type="checkbox"/> MONTHLY CREDIT CARD DONATION OF \$		<input type="checkbox"/> PLEASE CHARGE THIS CARD:	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$20	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="text" value=""/>	
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CARDHOLDER'S NAME		CARDHOLDER'S SIGNATURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> HEART DISEASE		<input type="checkbox"/> BEQUESTS	
<input type="checkbox"/> DIABETES		<input type="checkbox"/> FREE WILL SERVICE	
<input type="checkbox"/> PROSTATE CANCER		<input type="checkbox"/> REGULAR GIVING	
<input type="checkbox"/> MELANOMA		<input type="checkbox"/> PLEASE DO NOT SEND ME FURTHER INFORMATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER			