

New advanced cancer centre opens



The new ACRF Tasmanian Inherited Cancer Centre

Researchers James Marthick and Briony Patterson with the new customised robot



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The opening of the ACRF Tasmanian Inherited Cancer Centre represents a major milestone for medical research in Tasmania. It is the first world-class cancer research facility for Tasmania.

Funded by a \$1.1 million dollar grant from the Australian Cancer Research Foundation (ACRF), the centre was officially opened, at Menzies Research Institute Tasmania, by the Minister for Health, Michelle O'Byrne in late September.

The new ACRF Cancer Centre will enable our researchers to lead the fight against cancer. The research will focus on cancers in which family history is a high risk factor. These include prostate cancer and blood cancers such as leukaemia and lymphoma.

The ACRF Cancer Centre will bring together geneticists, biologists, clinicians and ethicists from across Tasmania who are committed to identifying genes that predispose people to cancer.

The ACRF Cancer Centre provides our researchers with access to some of the world's leading cancer technology. The centre houses a customised robot that rapidly screens for potential genetic markers important to identifying the onset and progress of disease as well as a laser microscope that can select individual cells and chromosomes.

The ACRF Centre also provides our researchers with advanced IT infrastructure for our genealogical database and genetic analyses, enabling us to take advantage of the latest advances in gene analysis technology.

Director of Menzies, Professor Simon Foote says this new world-class technology can save us years of research and provide better outcomes for people with cancer.

"On behalf of Menzies, I extend my deepest gratitude to ACRF, for making this important undertaking for Tasmania possible," Professor Foote said.

Director's message



Professor Simon Foote, Director

Menzies is playing a leading role in the fight against chronic disease in Australia. This includes diseases such as cancer, dementia, heart disease, diabetes and depression.

This summer edition of the *Bulletin* highlights the important work we are currently doing to reduce the impact of chronic disease on the health of our community. It illustrates the strong support we are receiving for our work from government and other funding bodies, and the sound backing of the Tasmanian community. Without your support many of the projects highlighted in this edition would not have reached fruition. Menzies is extremely grateful for your enduring support.

New advances in technology are enabling medical research to take giant steps forward. The ACRF Tasmanian Inherited Cancer Centre with its new technology is enabling our researchers to perform vital research tasks significantly faster than was possible to perform previously by hand. These technological advances are a sign of the times and are revolutionising the way we now approach cancer research.

I look forward to sharing our accomplishments with you and again thank you for your continuing support of our work.

Menzies awarded \$5.2 million in research funding

The Menzies Research Institute Tasmania was yet again highly successful in achieving funding through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Australian Research Council (ARC) this year.

Researchers at Menzies performed exceptionally well, with seven research project grants and four fellowship grants awarded. These national grants have been won in a very highly competitive environment.

The new funding will enable these researchers to continue their careers in Tasmania and further their work on diseases such as Alzheimer's disease, dementia, motor neuron disease, type 2 diabetes, autoimmune disease, multiple sclerosis and osteoporosis.

Dr Tracey Dickson received a \$379,034 NHMRC project grant for her work into amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), the major cause of motor neuron disease.

Dr Stuart Ferguson (School of Pharmacy and Menzies) received a \$518,252 NHMRC project grant over three years, for his work on the efficacy of text messages to aid smoking cessation.

Dr Tania Winzenberg received a \$214,806 NHMRC project grant over two years, for her work investigating strategies to address long term maintenance of bone density in younger women.

Dr Michelle Keske received a \$395,518 NHMRC project grant over three years, for her work on insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes, titled 'Green Tea and Insulin Sensitivity'.

Professor James Vickers received a \$322,524 NHMRC project grant over three years, for his work on myelin loss in Alzheimer's disease.

Professor Heinric Korner received a \$506,706 NHMRC project grant over three years, for his work on autoimmune disease.

Ms Sharon Andrews received a NHMRC Translating Research Into Practice (TRIP) Fellowship for \$124,000 for her work on promoting positive staff-family relationships in residential aged care.

Professor Alison Venn received a \$560,640 NHMRC Research Fellowship, for her studies on epidemiological approaches to understanding the causes and prevention of chronic disease.

Professor David Small received a \$630,505 NHMRC Research Fellowship, over five years, to further his work on Alzheimer's disease, investigating the biochemistry and molecular biology of amyloidosis.

Dr Ingrid van der Mei received a \$570,000 ARC Future Fellowship over five-years for research on multiple sclerosis, focusing on its causes and the lifestyle factors that affect it. Vitamin D supplementation will be trialled as a treatment as part of the project.

Congratulations go out to all those involved. This is a time for the institute to celebrate its success.

A notable contributor to Tasmanian cancer research



Jean Blyth Panton (1926 - 2010)

A remarkable contributor to cancer research in Tasmania, Jean Blyth Panton, OAM, passed away on 17 October, 2010.

Over three decades Jean Blyth Panton worked for the University of Tasmania School of Medicine and Menzies Research Institute Tasmania. Her important role involved information gathering for several early epidemiological projects related to Tasmanian cancer research.

In her semi-retirement Jean remained an active voluntary participant in her community. Jean joined the Public and Environment Health Network when it was formed in 2007.

Jean was the Hobart City Council's 2008 Citizen of the Year in recognition of her extensive contributions to the community, including medical research, historical heritage and the environment.

She received her Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for her services to the community through medical research, and to the conservation of the environment in 2005.

"Jean will be greatly missed by all," Professor Foote, Director of Menzies said.

"On behalf of everyone at Menzies, I express our deep gratitude to Jean for her important contribution to cancer research in the State and in building a healthier Tasmania".

Foote

Skipping breakfast may be risky to your health

Did you have breakfast this morning?

A recently published study by Menzies has shown that skipping breakfast over a long period of time may increase your risk of heart disease and diabetes.

Skipping breakfast is a fairly common practice, with 23 per cent of adults and 10 per cent of children reporting in the 1995 National Nutrition Survey (Australia) that they did not regularly eat breakfast, and there is evidence that skipping breakfast is becoming more common.

Previous studies have already shown eating breakfast is good for weight management, but this study shows that eating breakfast is also good for reducing other risk factors for heart disease and diabetes such as blood insulin and cholesterol levels, independently of weight.

Chief study investigator, PhD student, Kylie Smith says people who reported skipping breakfast both during childhood and adulthood had more risk factors for diabetes and heart disease than their peers who ate breakfast at both times in the study.

The investigation was part of the national Childhood Determinants of Adult Health (CDAH) study. Over 2,000 participants nationwide were involved with the breakfast skipping study, with a 20 year follow-up from childhood to early adulthood.

"Compared to those who ate breakfast both as a child and an adult, those who skipped breakfast on both occasions had a larger waist circumference, and had higher fasting insulin, total cholesterol



Research shows we should all make the effort to eat breakfast

and LDL cholesterol (the bad cholesterol), which are all risk factors for heart disease and diabetes," Ms Smith said.

So what should you be eating for breakfast?

"Wholegrain breakfast cereals with reduced fat milk, baked beans or poached eggs on wholegrain toast, fresh fruit and reduced fat yoghurt are all quick and easy nutritious breakfasts that will help set the family up for the day," says Ms Susan Anderson, National Director – Healthy Weight, Heart Foundation.

For further nutritional advice and breakfast ideas go to the Healthy Eating section of the National Heart Foundation website: www.heartfoundation.org.au/healthyeating

Exploring new ways to reduce skin cancer



Glorious warm days at the beach, relaxing times in the garden, backyard cricket matches and barbeques with family and friends all come to mind, as we head into the height of summer. So do sunburn, sunscreen and skin cancer.

With Australia having the highest level of skin cancer in the world, at nearly four times the rates in Canada, the US and the UK, Menzies is stepping up its contribution to the fight against skin cancer.

Skin cancers account for 80 per cent of all newly diagnosed cancers.

Two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer by the time they are 70 years old.

Around 450 Australians die from non-melanoma skin cancer each year and 1250 people die each year from melanoma skin cancer.

Exposure to ultraviolet radiation is a significant cause as high levels of radiation damages DNA and affects our immune system. By protecting against these deleterious effects it might be possible to develop appropriate therapeutic strategies to reduce this burden.

Associate Professor Greg Woods and his team of researchers are currently evaluating the benefits of two products that are produced naturally, Vitamin D and metallothionein and whether they reduce skin cancer development. Metallothionein is a protective protein that binds heavy metals, such as zinc and lead.

In a laboratory based study, our researchers are testing whether Vitamin D and/or metallothionein, by reducing DNA damage and associated suppression of the immune response, can also reduce skin cancer development.

Associate Professor Woods says the unique aspect of this work is that it will concentrate on the environment within the early period of life, as sun burning doses in early childhood have been shown to increase the risk of skin cancer, such as melanoma, later in life.

Please visit our website, www.menziesutas.edu.au, if you would like to learn more about any of our current cancer research projects.

Investigating the brain's protective cells

Nerve cells in the brain are usually protected from damage by 'insulating cells' called oligodendrocytes. These insulating cells are damaged in people with Alzheimer's disease, indicating that they could be a good treatment target.

Oligodendrocytes are produced by a group of cells called OPC's. It may be possible to boost OPC activity to repair or replace lost insulating cells.

Professor David Small was recently awarded a three-year project grant worth £268,779 (\$434,400AU) to investigate the potential of OPC's as a treatment target for Alzheimer's disease, by the UK Alzheimer's Society and Bupa Foundation.

The study will be carried out by Professor Small, at Menzies, and Dr Kaylene Young, who is currently based at the University College London (UCL). Dr Young will work in London for the first year of the project before continuing her work in the second and third years at Menzies.

The researchers will work with laboratory models of Alzheimer's disease to find out what happens to OPC's and insulating cells during Alzheimer's disease.

This new research will hopefully provide a better understanding of the role of other important brain cells in dementia, and whether they could be targeted by a treatment in the future.

Farewell to one of Australia's great public health advocates



Dr Trevor Cory Beard (1920 - 2010)

In September this year, Menzies lost one of its most passionate and well-recognised researchers, Dr Trevor Beard, OAM, at 90 years of age.

Trevor Beard was a man who completely devoted his life

to improving human health. He was indeed one of Australia's greatest campaigners of public health.

As the local GP in Campbell Town, during the 1950's, Trevor vigorously spear-headed a successful campaign to eliminate human hydatid disease in Tasmania. Tasmania was the first territory in the world to declare provisional eradication of hydatid disease. It was an achievement for which he was awarded an Order of the British Empire.

In 1988, in his post "retirement" he began working at the Menzies Research Institute Tasmania. As an Honorary Research Fellow, Trevor remained active in his research relating to hypertension and salt, right up until the end. He was involved in various research projects including the first large community survey of sodium intakes in Australia.

He passionately promoted low-salt diets for the prevention of hypertension and vigorously lobbied many areas of the food industry and government. He played a pivotal role in having the official sodium intake recommendations in Australia lowered in 2005. At a local level, he advocated successfully for the Royal Hobart Hospital and Meals on Wheels to provide low-sodium meals.

Dr Beard's campaign continued until his death this year. Earlier this year he set a challenge for Hobart's Drysdale House—training ground for future chefs in Tasmania—to provide monthly lunches that would be low in salt, total fat, saturated fat, and sugar. He was also actively campaigning to see the introduction of the UK's traffic light labelling of foods introduced into Australia.

"One of the many privileges of working with Trevor Beard was his passion for his work," says Professor Simon Foote, Director of Menzies.

"Trevor was a man of formidable intellect, tenacity, good humour and personal warmth. We have lost a truly remarkable colleague and friend."

Thank you to our valued supporters

Thank you to all of our donors for your ongoing financial support and commitment to Menzies. Listed below are new individual and community supporters of Menzies for August 2010 to October 2010:

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Community support

Mount Stuart Primary School

Menzies healthy community fund

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Listed below are our Everyday Angels – our monthly supporters who make regular gifts to Menzies.

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The Menzies Research Institute Tasmania is deeply indebted to ALL our generous supporters who have kindly donated in 2010. Thank you.

Researcher profile: Dr Michelle Keske

What is the current focus of your research?

My research has shown that capillaries (small blood vessels in the body) in muscle play an important role in blood glucose regulation. After a meal, a healthy individual releases insulin from the pancreas into the blood stream, which stimulates the movement of glucose from blood into muscle tissue. My research has shown that insulin stimulates capillary blood flow in muscle to increase the delivery of glucose to muscle cells. During type-2 diabetes and insulin-resistance (the condition that precedes type-2 diabetes) this process is blunted, and therefore the delivery and uptake of glucose into muscle declines.

What are some of the recent findings of your research?

Impaired capillary function in muscle contributes to the development of insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes. My research group is actively screening new treatment strategies that work by improving capillary function in muscle. I am currently working with the National Institutes of Health, USA, on a compound found in green tea called EGCG which is showing promising results.



Dr Michelle Keske

What is the biggest challenge in your area of research?

Type 2 diabetes affects more than one million people in Australia and 60 per cent of adult Australians are overweight and therefore at risk of developing diabetes. There are few drugs available to treat this disease and many of these drugs have unwanted side effects. Therefore there is a desperate need to develop new treatments for insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes with novel modes of action.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Spending time with my family, especially my one year old son. I also enjoy camping and being outdoors.

A great believer in medical research



Miss Cecily Jennett McKinley (1919-2007)

The Board and staff of Menzies Research Institute Tasmania are deeply grateful for the Miss Cecily Jennett McKinley bequest recently received.

Miss McKinley lived her life with a passion for the arts, teaching and travel.

Born on 3 November, 1919, Miss McKinley grew up in Hobart and spent her school years at The Friends' School.

Her love of dance and theatre began to thrive when she enrolled at Beattie Jordan's Dance School. This led to a long-term connection with The Hobart Repertory Theatre Society as an actor and producer.

Miss McKinley trained at Hobart Teachers' College and Launceston Junior Technical High School in the early 1940s to become an art teacher. She began teaching art at Hobart High School in 1944 and later spent a number of years at Ogilvie High School and Rose Bay High School. She was a devoted teacher and kept in touch with many of her former pupils after they had graduated.

Miss McKinley travelled widely in Australia and overseas. Always a great believer in education, she maintained an unquenchable interest in theatre, the arts, architecture, and world and local affairs, up until her death in October 2007.

Director Professor Simon Foote is honoured that Miss McKinley so generously remembered Menzies in her estate.

"Miss McKinley's bequest will significantly assist Menzies' researchers in carrying out their innovative work," he said.

Investing in the future

Hobart-based IT company Hypertronics is leading the way in the support of medical research in Tasmania. In March, this year, Hypertronics became the first business to pledge an ongoing monthly donation by joining Menzies' Everyday Angel program.

Hypertronics Managing Director, Stephen Catchpool said the company was excited about the opportunity to support the

work of the Menzies Research Institute Tasmania.

"We believe that effective health and medical research depends on investment from government and business as well as the broader Tasmanian community," he said.

Mr Catchpool chose to support dementia research projects because he has seen the devastating effects of this disease.

"I have been impressed with the work that Menzies is doing and I am very interested in dementia research. This is a growing problem with an ageing population and one that I have witnessed the sad and significant effects of in my own family."

Hypertronics is very proud to be the first Tasmanian business to become an Everyday Angel.

"I encourage all Tasmanian businesses to donate to Menzies and invest in world-leading research in a world-class facility."



Hypertronics Managing Director, Stephen Catchpool



Menzies Research Institute Tasmania
17 Liverpool Street, Hobart,
Tasmania 7000
Phone: 03 6226 7700
www.menzies.utas.edu.au



research | thanks to you

THE ART OF CHRISTMAS 2010

This year's *Art of Christmas* event was by far the best and most successful. Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, 36 talented Tasmanian artists, numerous volunteers and 300 guests who attended, we raised over \$40,000 on the night.

This year's sixth annual *Art of Christmas* event was held for the first time at the Long Gallery, which was the perfect venue for the event. We hope to be fortunate enough to secure this venue again next year.

There were over 80 pieces of artwork available for purchase on the night, including painting, print media, photography and sculpture.

If you missed the event, there are a few pieces still available for sale, which can be viewed on our website www.menzies.utas.edu.au/ArtofChristmas2010. Please contact Fiona Horwood on 03 6226 7751 if you would like to come in to Menzies and view the artwork in person.

Thank you

A big thank you to the following artists, sponsors and special individuals who were involved with making our 2010 *Art of Christmas* event so successful:

Art of Christmas cards now available

If you have not already bought your Christmas cards this year, why not purchase a pack of Christmas cards from Menzies?

These high quality cards are all uniquely designed by Tasmanian artists and money raised from the cards (\$10 for a pack of 12 cards) goes directly to medical research in Tasmania. For more information on purchasing our Art of Christmas cards please contact reception on 03 6226 7700 or view and order them online at www.menzies.utas.edu.au/ArtofChristmas2010.



Artists:

Bert Aperloo
Deborah Asma Mather
Veronika Beinssen-Henry
Louise Bloomfield
Steve Cherrie
Keith Climpson
Stuart Clues
Tracey Cockburn
Anthony Curtis
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Geoff Dyer
Wendy Fletcher
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Patrick Grieve
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Special thanks:

Peter Gilbert and Joan Murray, Planit Art Transport and Installations
Maria Lurighi
Neville Moane
The Hutchins School – BLUENOTE Ensemble (Scott Cashion)
Christine Scott
Kim Maisch
Stewart Wells
Don Scott and Ray Collins

Gifts in memory and in honour

In Memoriam
August 2010
– October 2010

We gratefully acknowledge gifts made
in honour of:

Anonymous (6)	Mr Alan MacNeill
Dr Trevor Beard	McCormick
Mrs Veronica Anne Calvert	Mr Andrew Napier
Mr William Dobson	The Honourable Sue Napier
Mr Lawrence H Ford	Mr John Sluce
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Society for the Future



**"One sentence in your Will can fund
life-saving medical research.
Remember Menzies Research
Institute Tasmania in your Will"**

If you would like more information please
contact Barbara Zimmerman on
03 6226 7782 or email
Barbara.Zimmerman@menzies.utas.edu.au
Bequests save lives by funding research.

Thank you!



Yes, I would like to help the
Menzies Research Institute Tasmania.

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- I would like to have monthly donations of \$ _____
deducted from my credit card.

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

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- Please send me information on remembering Menzies
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Thank you for your support.

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