

Celebrating 21 years of research excellence

This year marks the 21st Anniversary of the Menzies Research Institute.

Since its official opening in 1988, as the Menzies Centre for Population Health Research, we have seen Menzies grow from a handful of researchers to today being a world-renowned medical research facility.

Menzies' history is rich in accomplishments and research discoveries...

In 1990, Menzies was designated a World Health Organisation (WHO) Collaborating Centre and in 2000, the Tasmanian government named Menzies a "Tasmanian Icon" in recognition of our outstanding scientific achievements, status and place in the Tasmanian community.

In 2005 we became the Menzies Research Institute and implemented a significant growth strategy that has seen us grow to almost 300 staff and research students. This amazing transformation was due to the leadership of our Director, Professor Simon Foote, and the Menzies' Board, chaired by Dr Dan Norton.

In 21 years, Menzies has made countless world-first discoveries in a diverse range of conditions. Our researchers have been at the forefront, positively impacting the lives of many people: from identifying a link between early life sun exposure and susceptibility



Official opening of the Menzies Centre for Population Health Research in 1988. (Left to Right) Professor Terry Dwyer, the late Mr Kevin Newman, Sir Ninian Stephen, the late Dame Pattie Menzies, Sir Guy Green, Sir William Vines and Professor Ian Lewis.

to multiple sclerosis; discovering the link between babies' sleeping position and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS); to recently discovering that platelets found in the blood kill the malaria parasite during the early stages of a malarial infection.

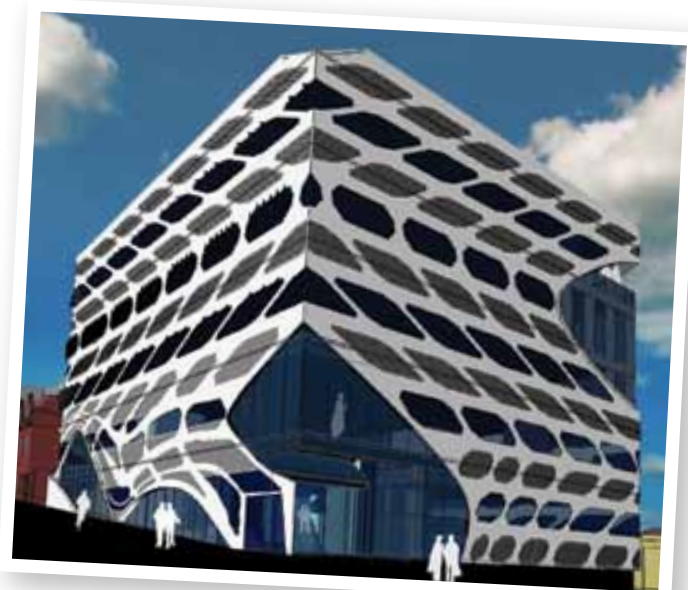
The future viability of Menzies was recently sealed by the Federal Government's recent commitment of \$44.7 million towards the development of a \$90 million second building for Menzies.

The new building, which is anticipated to be completed by the year 2012, will enable Menzies to build upon its research strengths and develop commercial opportunities that will benefit the health of individuals and the whole community.

The purpose of our organisation is to improve human health and wellbeing and we are achieving this thanks to our supporters and our dedicated research team for their passion and commitment to building a healthier future.

As we recognise and mark this momentous milestone, we thank you all for the generous support we have received over the last 21 years.

We look forward to sharing with you the next chapter of our journey, as we enter an exciting new era in medical research.



A new era on the horizon.

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Director's message



As winter settles in around Hobart, it is with pleasure that I welcome you to our winter edition of the *Bulletin*.

While we reflect on our 21 years of world class research excellence, it is with great excitement that we look forward to the next 21 years for Menzies. Thanks to the support of the Federal Government, the Tasmanian Government and the Tasmanian community our future looks bright.

The recent government funding announcement will support our new building project and provide for the continuing growth and expansion of Menzies' as we head towards a new era in health and medical research.

We hope to attract further high-quality professionals to Tasmania, enabling us to expand our research by covering more disease areas, increase our collaborative links throughout the world, and provide more opportunities for employment and professional development for researchers and medical professionals.

The benefits this will bring to Tasmania and the health of the community cannot be overstated.

We are also excited to announce the recent launching of the new Menzies' Honours Scholarship Program. These scholarships provide our brightest Honours students with significant financial support to study at Menzies in their area of research expertise. Honours scholars are essential to Menzies' success and they are the very future of our research. Congratulations to our five scholars for 2009.

Professor Simon Foote

CDAH Phase 2 study begins



Associate Professor Alison Venn will lead the CDAH-2 investigative team

In 2001, Menzies embarked on a major study called the Childhood Determinants of Adult Health (CDAH). The study's long-term aim is to determine the contribution of childhood factors to the risk of developing cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes (cardio-metabolic disease) in adulthood.

The study involved the follow-up of 8,498 children, who participated in the 1985 Australian Schools Health and Fitness Survey (ASHFS).

In 2001–3 the focus was on tracing the original ASHFS participants and recruiting them into the follow-up study.

In 2004–6 a sub-sample of participants had extensive measurements taken including: height, weight and waist circumference; physical fitness; blood cholesterol, insulin and glucose; lung function and bone density.

So far, findings have resulted in 20 international published papers on the risk factors of cardio-metabolic disease in children and young adults.

Crucial to the long-term success of this study, is the need to regularly update measures of cardio-metabolic disease risk factors as participants get older.

The first follow-up of the cohort (CDAH-1) cost more than \$2.5 million and was very time consuming – consequently a regular full measurement protocol is not practicable.

Instead, full clinic measures will be repeated every ten years and in intervening years, participants will complete written questionnaires and telephone interviews regarding lifestyle, circumstances and mental wellbeing.

Five years have lapsed since clinic measures began for our first follow-up (CDAH-1) and it is now time for CDAH-2, the second follow-up of the cohort, which was funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council late last year. Associate Professor Alison Venn will lead the CDAH-2 study.

In CDAH-2, participants will be aged 31–40 years and are likely to have undergone important life-stage transitions – completing education and training, and having greater family, work and financial responsibilities. They are also more likely to have depression than older adults which is considered a risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

The focus of CDAH-2 is to investigate how life-stage transitions and depression in young Australian adults affect the development of obesity and the adoption of behaviours associated with cardio-metabolic disease risk – smoking, poor diet, physical inactivity and alcohol consumption.



A better understanding of these associations will contribute to risk factor reduction strategies in the under 40's and give insights into the link between depression and cardio-metabolic disease.

Big response to arthritis study

We would like to send out a heartfelt thank you to everyone who responded to our call for participants in our new arthritis research studies.

In our last *Bulletin*, we shared with you the story of Cameron and Duncan Brooke, brothers diagnosed with a debilitating form of arthritis called Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS). Our researchers at Menzies have set up the Tasmanian Ankylosing Spondylitis Study (TASS) to research AS prevalence in

Tasmania and to search for improved diagnosis and management techniques.

We received a huge response to our media campaign. Most calls were from general arthritis sufferers, but we were delighted to be able to recruit 16 new candidates for the AS study and two candidates for the Scleroderma study.

The AS study is currently in the early stages and we will update our readers on progress in future editions of the *Bulletin*.

Taking the pressure off

Menzies Research Institute in conjunction with the Royal Hobart Hospital and University of Queensland has commenced a world-first study that will potentially lead to a crucial new approach to managing high blood pressure (BP) in clinical practice.

New Menzies' Senior Research Fellow, Dr James Sharman, who recently returned home to Tasmania, after eight years based at the University of Queensland, is chief investigator for the study.

This study provides a potential foundation model for a new way to undertake management of high BP which is expected to be a great improvement on the current situation.

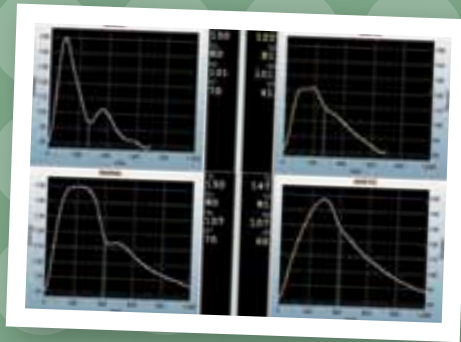
High BP, also known as hypertension, is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease and the most frequent problem managed by General Practitioners in Australia.

Clinicians have traditionally focused on upper arm BP for diagnosis and treatment decisions for over 100 years. However, there is strong evidence to suggest that this may not be the most effective approach.

Key to the project is a new technology that enables doctors to gain a central blood pressure reading with a pen-size device to record the pressure pulse at the wrist. This discovery could see the end of solely focussing on the traditional blood-pressure cuff.

This study will be the first to test how effective this technology and new approach can be for guiding treatment in day-to-day patient care.

"The upper arm BP does not give us accurate information on the BP that the



Radial versus central (aortic) BP – differences may be critical to patient care.

organs may be exposed to. This is known as central BP and using new technology we can now record this simply from the pressure pulse at the wrist. Importantly, large differences in central BP may occur between people with same, or similar, upper arm BP," Dr Sharman said.

This difference may be critical to patient care because many studies have shown that central BP parameters predict cardiovascular disease and mortality independent of upper arm BP.

This new research aims to bridge the gap between the current method of managing patients with high BP (focus on upper arm BP) and the theoretical improvement in the quality of patient care that may be achieved with the use of new technology and consideration of central BP.

Menzies has been overwhelmed by the public response to voluntary participate in the study. More than 100 Tasmanians have registered to take part in the tests that will start in the next few weeks. Participants will be followed over the course of 12 months.

Moving right along

The UTAS Medical Sciences building, also known as the co-location project, is on track for completion by late November this year. Menzies' staff will commence moving into the building from December.

Workers will fit the unique curved windows in place in June which is certain to add to the building's landmark characteristics.

The five concrete floor levels and the level six rooftop plant room are finished. The facade glazing is 50 per cent complete. Inside, the fit-out is steadily moving along, with ceilings and plasterboard wall linings well advanced through to level three of the building.

Staff tours of the new building have been conducted over the past month and staff have been impressed by the quality of the building and are excited about moving in. The large feature window of the boardroom, which spans two floor levels, is eye-catching and the view is equally impressive.

You can view the latest progress of the building via webcam at:

www.healthsci.utas.edu.au/collocation/livefeed/live_feed.html



Progress shot of the new UTAS Medical Sciences building, Hobart (March 2009).

Researcher profile: Dr Ingrid van der Mei



Dr Ingrid van der Mei.

What is the current focus of your research?

A large part of my work focuses on factors that prevent the onset of Multiple Sclerosis (MS) or reduce the progression of the disease. Our group often focuses on lifestyle factors such as sun exposure, diet and exposure to infections, but we also examine how these lifestyle factors work

together with genes to cause disease. Another part of my work focuses on vitamin D deficiency in healthy populations in Tasmania and Australia.

What are some of the recent findings from your work?

In relation to MS, we have found monthly vitamin D levels correlate highly with monthly relapse rates in people with MS. This might suggest that higher vitamin D levels at a personal level might reduce the risk of having a relapse. This is what we are currently investigating. In relation to vitamin D deficiency, we found that 67 per cent of healthy Tasmanian adults are vitamin D deficient in winter and spring. That is a concern, given that vitamin D seems to do much more than just being involved in bone health.

What is the biggest challenge in your area of research?

The biggest challenge in MS research is the high level of complexity. MS is a disease caused by a combination of many factors including genes and lifestyle factors. For different groups of people, different combinations of those factors will have caused their MS. To unravel the complex mechanisms that cause MS is a real challenge.

What do you enjoy doing away from the research?

I enjoy this precious period of my life where I work half-time and spend the other half with my children. I like to spend time outdoors in a physically active way (playing soccer, bush walking, mountain biking, roller blading, kayaking). Tasmania is a beautiful place to do that.

Cancer research awards 2009

Each year, the Cancer Council Tasmania and the David Collins Leukaemia Foundation contribute a portion of their allocated funds to significant research conducted in Tasmania.



Heather McGee accepts her award from Associate Professor Greg Woods.

The Menzies Research Institute is honoured to have been the recipient of a number of project funding awards for 2009.

Dr Jo Dickinson continues as the Cancer Council Tasmania Research Fellow with a grant of \$345,000 awarded over a three year period. Dr Dickinson and her team were recognised for their prostate cancer research with a grant of \$45,600 for the project, *Elucidation of the role of the integrin alpha 2 gene (ITGA2) in prostate cancer*. Dr Dickinson's blood cancer research received a boost of \$29,000 from the David Collins Leukaemia Foundation for the project, *Investigating the Genetics of Familial Haematological Cancers in Tasmania*.

Associate Professor Greg Woods has been awarded \$54,400 towards research into vitamin D with his project, *Influence of vitamin D and gender on UVB-induced DNA damage, immunoregulation and development of melanoma*.

Dr Adele Holloway's research into leukaemia has received a \$10,000 boost from the David Collins Leukaemia Foundation for her work in *Investigating novel targets of the RUNX1 transcription Factor*.

Menzies also achieved success in the Small Grants Scheme for New Researchers. PhD candidate Heather McGee received \$9,200 for her research project *Investigating the potential therapeutic use of metallothionein in ultraviolet radiation-induced skin cancer*, and received an additional \$2,500 scholarship to attend the 15th International Congress on Photobiology in Germany.

The Cancer Council Tasmania Honours Scholarship has been awarded to Annabel Short for her investigation into *The role of methylation in the regulation of a novel prostate cancer gene*.

Congratulations to all our researchers and their teams for their successes, and our thanks to Cancer Council Tasmania and the David Collins Leukaemia Foundation for their invaluable and ongoing support.

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 Menzies' individual and community supporters for February 2009 – April 2009.

Individual Donors

Anonymous (5)
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Community Supporters

11s Healthy Hearts Team – Goodwood
Dunalley RSL Sub Branch
Hotel Gateway Devonport

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

Everyday Angels

Anonymous (7)
Mr Tim Albion
Mr Bill Avery
Mr Stephen Bender
Mrs Pamela Blunt
Dr David Boadle
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Mrs Pat Vallance
Mr & Mrs Walter and Robin Verth
Mr & Mrs John and Kathlyn Wheatley
Mrs Margaret Williams
Ms Barbara Zimmerman and
Prof John Dickey

The Menzies Research Institute is deeply indebted to ALL our generous supporters who kindly donated to our research. Thank you.


research|thanks to you

Honouring our brightest students

The Menzies Research Institute Scholarship Program was officially launched in May, offering sponsored scholarships to five outstanding Menzies' honours students. More than \$25,000 was awarded to Menzies most creative and innovative students.

The new scholarships will enable some of Tasmania's brightest students to focus on their area of study and potentially life-saving research. The five young researchers' particular areas of research include diabetes, cystic fibrosis, neuroscience, immunology and malaria.

The funds have allowed Menzies to offer honours scholarships to 20 students this year – more than double that in 2008.

Director of the Menzies Research Institute, Professor Simon Foote, said students were extremely valuable to the Institute, offering fresh ideas to enhance Menzies research.



Left to right: Paul Vincent, General Manager, Corporate Express Tasmania; Kelli Jones; Scott Wilson, State Sales Manager, Corporate Express Tasmania and Dr Margaret Cooley.

The launch of the Menzies Research Institute Scholarship Program was made possible through the generous support shown by Veolia Environmental Services, Corporate Express, Mansfield Builders and the Ian Matterson family.

Kelli Jones received the Corporate Express Scholarship for her research into finding a vaccine against Pseudomonas

aeruginosa – a bacterium of particular concern to the cystic fibrosis community.

Helene Matterson Medical Research Scholarships were awarded to Lucy Apps and Rhea Longley for immunology studies and malaria research respectively.

The Veolia Environmental Health Services Scholarship was awarded to Andreas Greth for diabetes research and Kate Lewis received the

Mansfield Builders' Scholarship for neuro repair research.

We are very grateful for the support we have received from the community for the new scholarship awards. Having such sponsorship support enables Menzies to help more students and further advance Menzies along its path of research discoveries.



Student finalists: Dawn Dore, Julia Harris, Carol Bussey and 2009 winner, Clare Smith.

As part of Medical Research Week, the Tasmanian Postgraduate Student Awards were held on Thursday 28 May at the University of Tasmania.

Medical Research Week is organised each year by the Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) to foster

Medical Research Week Student Awards

excellence in health and medical research and to promote community understanding and support for medical research.

The competition recognises outstanding contributions to medical research by Tasmanian tertiary students and provides an opportunity to share research results with the medical research community.

Menzies is proud to support the four research students nominated as finalists for the award: Carol Bussey, Dawn Dore, Clare Smith and Julie Harris.

Carol Bussey is currently investigating how the hormone adiponectin affects constriction of blood vessels, to potentially define new drug targets for the treatment of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Dawn is exploring three different bone measures to see which one best predicts cartilage damage in the hope of preventing or slowing cartilage loss in osteoarthritis.

Clare's PhD project has shown that inhibiting certain host enzymes in the red blood cell leads to the death of the malaria parasite.

Julie's studies have been investigating the potential immune capacity of olfactory ensheathing cells (OECs) as an agent of neural repair because of the damaging inflammatory reactions present in injury.

Congratulations go to Clare Smith for being named the winner of the ASMR Medical Research Week Student Award.

The awards are proudly sponsored by The Faculty of Health Science, UTAS Population and Health Theme and the Menzies Research Institute.



Menzies
Research
Institute

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An Institute of
the University of Tasmania

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Remembering Helene

The loss of Helene Matterson and her mother Kit Martin in a motor vehicle collision in March 2001 was a double blow for the Matterson family. Ian Matterson lost his wife of 34 years and his mother-in-law. For the children Richard, Catherine and Victoria none of whom were in Tasmania at the time, it was a sad homecoming to farewell their mother and grandmother.

Following her untimely death, the family looked to set up an appropriate method of remembrance for Helene's philanthropic and charitable work. Since much of Helene's energy was directed towards medical-based charities, the family agreed an ongoing research scholarship in Helene's name would be the most appropriate form of remembrance.

"Mothers provide some of our most valuable lessons in life, they nurture and influence our thought process as we develop and instill their beliefs and character in our behaviour. To say that Mum (Helene) taught us to be generous in our thoughts and actions would be understating these lessons; some of my earliest memories include helping to pack food parcels at Christmas for one of the many charities Mum supported. I couldn't think of a better way to honour her memory than a scholarship into the research of diseases and their cure," said son Richard Matterson.

Ian is immensely proud of the time, thought and effort Helene gave to her charitable activities. While she always kept a low profile in her work, Ian believes Helene would thoroughly approve of the concept of the research scholarship.

"There are two possible scenarios of which she would approve. The first is that research may yield some form of treatment that can alleviate the pain and suffering with which so many people live. The second, and the greatest goal to seek, is a possible cure to diseases that have to date given the impression of being incurable."

The family has guaranteed the quantum of the scholarship for five years after which they will consider the effects of inflation and re-assess its value. While all three children live and work elsewhere, they are still very much Tasmanians at heart and are delighted to be supporting the Menzies Research Institute in their vital work.

If you or your company would like to join the Matterson Family in supporting a researcher, please ring Menzies Development Manager on 03 6226 7782 or email Barbara.Zimmerman@menzies.utas.edu.au



Left to right: The Matterson Family, Richard, Catherine, Victoria and Ian.

Fundraising for a healthier future



Mr Vere Cooper (left) and Mr Peter Noble (right) from the Lions Club of Devonport Mersey present Menzies' Development Manager, Ms Barbara Zimmerman with a \$1,000 cheque towards medical research.

The Lions Club of Devonport Mersey hit the streets of Devonport over Christmas to raise money on behalf of the Menzies Research Institute.

The Club sold raffle tickets and Lions Christmas Cakes all over Devonport – from the Farmers Market to the Fourways shopping centre and the Hub Arcade off Rooke Mall. Two sausage sizzles were also held at the Devonport Kmart complex to raise money.

After all their hard work, Lions' President Mr Vere Cooper and immediate Past President Mr Peter Noble presented Menzies' Development Manager, Ms Barbara Zimmerman, with a \$1,000 cheque towards further medical research in type 2 diabetes.

At each selling venue the Lions handed out information relating to type 2 diabetes. The response from the public was great and the Lions intend to hold a similar raffle this year.

Our thanks go to the Lions Club of Devonport Mersey and the generosity shown by the people of Devonport.

More than flowers

In Memorium February 2009 – April 2009

We gratefully acknowledge gifts made
in honour of:

Mrs France Hamel Corbie Andrews
Dr Anthony Chambers
Mrs Jennifer Dunn
Mr Juraj (George) Hegol
Mr David Hill
Mrs Maria McKenna
Mrs Barbara Payne
Mr Colin Pepper

Society for the Future



"Remember Menzies Research Institute in Your Will"

If you have made a gift in your Will
for Menzies Research Institute, please
contact Barbara Zimmerman
on 03 6226 7782 or email
Barbara.Zimmerman@menzies.utas.edu.au
so we may extend our gratitude.

Bequests save lives by funding
new research projects.

Thank you!



Yes, I would like to help the Menzies Research Institute

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I would like to have monthly donations of \$ _____
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purposes at the discretion of the Menzies Research
Institute, unless a particular research purpose is
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Please send me information on remembering Menzies
in my Will.

Thank you for your support.

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