

# PERKINS NEWS

OCTOBER 2020



HARRY PERKINS INSTITUTE  
OF MEDICAL RESEARCH

**OCTOBER IS PERKINS  
GRATITUDE MONTH AND  
WE'RE CELEBRATING YOU!**



# Fighting COVID together

## West Australians just like you have stepped up to take COVID-19 head on

**In a wonderful show of community compassion, more than 7,000 West Australians registered their interest for a pioneering COVID-19 vaccine trial at the Perkins trials facility, Linear Clinical Research.**

The COVID-19 virus has disrupted countless lives and resulted in the tragic deaths of more than 1 million people worldwide. A vaccine could deliver safe immunity to you and your loved ones.

Linear Clinical Trials CEO, Jayden Rogers said it's important we consider finding a vaccine for COVID-19 like a war.

"We need to attack from multiple fronts and a vaccine is a vital part

of our arsenal. We're trying to condense what would traditionally take 4-5 years into 18-20 months to try and help as many people as possible, as quickly as possible," Jayden said.

Perkins Director and Linear Chairman, Professor Peter Leedman said that because WA is in the unique position of having successfully suppressed COVID-19, it's important we dedicate resources to prevention.

"This is one of the most prominent trials globally and WA is playing a significant part because we are recognised as world leaders in early-stage clinical trials," Peter said.



"I applaud the thousands of people who registered to take part in this trial – we are extremely appreciative and I think it demonstrates how members of our community are willing to do what they can to serve their neighbours and loved ones."

## Your community care aiding vaccine victory

**Each of the 130 trial participants have their own personal reasons for taking part, but we saw one common theme amongst everyone's motivations – the desire to support loved ones and neighbours like you.**

First-time trial volunteer, 59 year old small business owner, Timothy Roberts, told us he's proud to be part of such an important clinical trial.

"Like a lot of people, I felt like all I could do was socially distance and wash my hands so when I learned I could actively participate in finding a solution, I was happy to be involved," Timothy said.

"I volunteered to help people like my 85-year-old dad. He still wants to travel, I still want him to travel and we really need a vaccine or a medical solution for him to do that."

"I'm a great believer in the methodology of science. There's a long history of very successful, reliable and safe vaccines, and that doesn't happen without science and research."

Another participant, Perth doctor Chris Rynn said he's seen the impact of COVID-19 on the medical profession and wanted to help in speeding up the process of finding a vaccine.



"It's such a momentous thing and it could make such a difference for so many people."

From all of us at the Perkins, thank you to every volunteer who has selflessly offered their help for the advancement of this vaccine. You are truly appreciated.

## It's not over yet!

Linear still needs Perth volunteers to take part in the COVID-19 vaccine trial. If you want to join this historic study, sign up today at [linear.org.au](https://linear.org.au)

## You funded 10,000 face shields

**In March, as the COVID-19 outbreak was rearing its head but before we knew what that might mean for our loved ones, here at the Perkins, we witnessed an overwhelming act of generosity when we asked you to help in the development of thousands of PPE face shields for frontline workers.**

A crack team that included Perkins Biomedical Engineers had a plan to develop face shields for healthcare workers, but with no resources to pay for them, we reached out to you.

Your response was immediate, immense and heart-warming, with over 1400 West Australians contributing to ensure that frontline workers had extra PPE to effectively manage the COVID-19 emergency, without risking their own health.

A team which included Perkins,

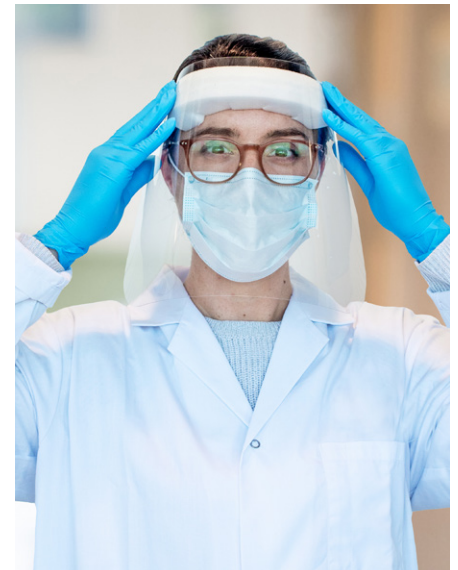
The University of Western Australia, Department of Health and Adarsh Australia, together with your support, enabled the manufacture of 10,000 face shields to support the WA health system.

Thankfully, Western Australia has so far managed to maintain uniquely low case numbers and our need for additional PPE hasn't worsened.

The shields are now part of WA Health's stock of PPE which is available to any public hospital in Western Australia.

On behalf of Perkins Director, Professor Peter Leedman, thank you for supporting the early stage of development of the face shields.

"This has been an extremely collaborative effort and we are enormously grateful to the many members of the community who offered their support."



**"Thank you for your generosity to the Perkins to help support frontline healthcare workers in WA."**

## A hat tip to you from healthcare workers

**Thanks to your fast-acting generosity, the WA Health Department has a backup supply of protective face shields that we can all rely on if a COVID outbreak occurs here in WA.**

Royal Perth Hospital Emergency physician, Professor Daniel Fatovich and ED research nurse manager, Jonathon Burcham, thanked the WA community for coming together to protect frontline healthcare workers.

"It's heart-warming to know that people banded together to help supply protective gear for health care workers like us," Professor Fatovich said.

"Not only was the response from West Australians incredibly generous, it was rapid and the PPE was funded in a matter of days. That's an extraordinary effort."

While Daniel and Jonathon aren't working in a COVID clinic, they are on the medical frontlines both working in the hospital's emergency department and at the Perkins Centre for Clinical Research in Emergency Medicine.

"Every day in our work, we're aiming to help West Australians like you recover from illness and injury, as well as find new and better ways to treat major health issues such as sepsis," Jonathon said.



"I think the outcome from this appeal speaks to the wonderful, giving nature of so many West Australians, who, when seeing a problem faced by their friends and neighbours, will work together to find a solution. So from all of us in healthcare, I'd like to extend a big thanks to everyone who donated to this appeal."

## We are so grateful for your continued support.

Why not pass on the love and send a message of thanks to someone you're grateful for today?

# The Kailis legacy continues thanks to you



**In April, WA lost an important figure in our community – fishing industry pioneer, doctor, researcher and philanthropist Dr Patricia Kailis AM OBE.**

Patricia and Michael Kailis were instrumental in establishing the WA cray fishing and prawning industries and later expanding into boat building, pearling and creating beautiful jewellery. Patricia also had a passion for science. Along with growing the family business, Patricia worked as a general practitioner with a keen interest in neuromuscular genetic disease.

Her research contributed to the discovery of the first known gene for Motor Neurone Disease, a finding that offered hope to thousands of

families around the world.

And her groundbreaking work will continue, thanks to people like you.

The Kailis family have established the Dr Patricia Verne Kailis Fellowship to seed new research and help families avoid the risk of passing on devastating diseases.

Rare genetic diseases cause 35% of deaths in the first year of life and around 80% of these genetic conditions remain undiagnosed.

Despite years of vital work, the likelihood of families having children affected by genetic diseases that can cause death at birth or in early childhood, will continue unless the groundbreaking genetics research taking place here

in Perth is given certainty.

The Kailis Fellowship will offer a career path to early and mid-career scientists who are focused on finding answers for those impacted by rare genetic diseases.

Dr Maria Kailis said the Fellowship was established to not only honour the life-changing work achieved by her mother, Dr Patricia Kailis, but to also encourage generous people like you to join in helping secure WA's internationally recognised genetics research.

Your support is already driving discoveries here in Perth, and through you, Dr Patricia Kailis' genetic research will continue to result in life-changing discoveries for families across the globe.

## Your support funds the hunt for disease genes

**The search for previously undiscovered disease-causing genes is being accelerated by your support for the Dr Patricia Verne Kailis Fellowship.**

The Fellowship's first recipient, Dr Gina Ravenscroft, said secure funding was rare in medical research, where grant applications have less than a 15% chance of being funded and only 12% for female applicants.

Gina works with renowned genetics researcher, Professor Nigel Laing AO, and her work is focused on finding the genetic diseases that cause some babies to be stillborn or die soon after birth.

"Your help in funding the hunt for

disease genes is a gift for affected families," Gina said.

"In one case we identified mutations in a gene that caused one family to lose five of their seven babies within an hour of birth. That couple waited almost 20 years for an answer.

"As a result of the Dr Patricia Verne Kailis Fellowship we will be able to provide more answers to more families and spend more time on training the next generation of research leaders."

The gene abnormalities discovered by Gina and her team have been included in the Federal Government pre-pregnancy screening program, Mackenzie's Mission, which means



that in future, couples can be screened for abnormalities that were uncovered thanks to your support.

"Thank you to everyone who is helping us keep families together. Research breakthroughs happen when expert minds of scientists and the big hearts of the WA community work together."

## How you can partner with us

You can partner with researchers like Gina in uncovering the next disease-causing gene for a family in need by supporting the Dr Patricia Verne Kailis Fellowship. Please get in touch with Kirstyn Johnson at [Kirstyn@perkins.org.au](mailto:Kirstyn@perkins.org.au) or 08 6151 0754



## You are someone's **SPARK** of hope

**Exmouth resident, Kevin Bayne, is grateful for WA medical research and the medical care he has received during his cancer journey.**

On a sunny day in February 2018, Kevin learned that a scan had revealed his melanoma skin cancer had spread to his temple, thyroid, liver and back.

"I cried like a little baby," he said.

Kevin's treatment included revolutionary immunotherapy drugs, a recent advancement that has changed the outlook for thousands of people diagnosed with advanced melanoma.

"The medicines super charged my immune system to help my body fight off the cancer.

"Thankfully by April 2018, I was in tears again when I learned that the treatment had worked and the cancer was gone."

A decade ago, melanoma that had spread to other parts of the body was regarded as untreatable but now thanks to life-saving medical advances new drugs are dramatically improving survival rates for people like Kevin.

In 2019, Kevin and his wife Denise visited the Perkins and met some of the doctors and scientists that are working to find new and better ways to keep families like yours together.

Inspired by his experience, Kevin chose to become a Spark member. The Spark is the Perkins monthly giving program which was launched last year. Kevin now makes a manageable monthly gift in support of WA medical research.

"I was humbled by what I saw. A dedicated team of researchers who were striving to find a cure for diseases to save and extend the lives of people like me," Kevin said.



**"I want to give back to the people at the Perkins that make possible the discoveries like the one I'm benefitting from and I would encourage everyone reading this to join me."**

Thank you to Kevin and all our wonderful Spark members who are fuelling research by providing vital monthly funds we can count on. To join, call Amelia on **08 6151 1220** or email [Amelia@perkins.org.au](mailto:Amelia@perkins.org.au)

## Your help brings international experts to Perth

**If you're ever facing a devastating disease diagnosis, you'll want the best medical care possible and access to the best scientific minds in your home State, working with local doctors and researchers to push forward improved outcomes for patients like you.**

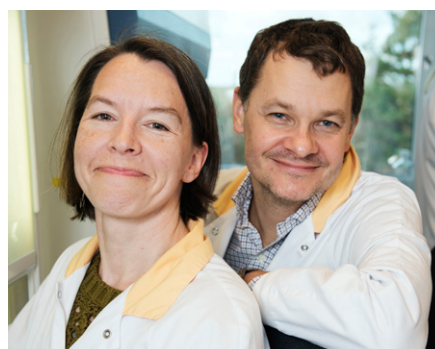
Now, thanks to your ongoing support, a world expert in Melanoma is moving to Perth from Sweden in the coming weeks.

Professor Jonas Nilsson, who is currently the Director of the Sahlgrenska Cancer Center in Gothenburg, Sweden, will take up the inaugural Chair in Melanoma position at the Perkins.

Jonas, along with his wife and senior scientist Lisa are bringing

two other melanoma experts to set up a new laboratory at the Perkins, together focused on finding new ways to combat melanoma – the third most common cancer diagnosed in Australia.

"Our team is investigating how we can alter immune cells outside a patient's body and then reintroduce



enhanced immune cells in large numbers to help that person fight off the disease," Jonas said.

It's directly because of the support of the Kirkbride family and friends, that WA can attract experts like Jonas to undertake their research here in Perth. Jonas's position has been funded through donations collected in the community to honour the memory of Scott Kirkbride.

Thank you to everyone who has fundraised for melanoma research at the Perkins. You are powering the next life-changing discovery here in WA and are having an incredible impact on patients and their families.

**You can learn more about melanoma research happening at the Perkins.**

Look out for our first Community Q&A of 2021 which will feature Jonas and other melanoma experts.

# Buzzing breakthroughs because of you



The Perkins recently received global recognition when WA researcher Dr Ciara Duffy announced her findings that honeybee venom was effective against some aggressive forms of breast cancer.

Ciara found that honeybee venom, extracted from bees in Perth, Ireland and England, rapidly destroyed triple-negative breast cancer and HER2-enriched breast cancer cells.

Triple-negative breast cancer is one of the most aggressive forms of breast cancer and currently has no clinically effective targeted treatment option.

Ciara found that a peptide within the venom called melittin was extremely potent and a specific concentration of honeybee venom was able to completely destroy cancer cell

membranes within 60 minutes while having minimal effects on normal cells.

The research team was able to reproduce melittin synthetically and found that the synthetic product mirrors the majority of the anti-cancer effects of honeybee venom.

"Better still, within 20 minutes melittin was able to substantially reduce the chemical messages of cancer cells that are essential to cancer cell growth and cell division," Ciara said.

This research provides another wonderful example of where compounds in nature can be used to treat human diseases.

Dr Ciara Duffy offers her sincere thanks to Perkins supporters like you and other West Australians



**"Your support is accelerating breakthrough research and making life-changing discoveries possible, so from everyone at the Perkins - thank you!"**

who continue to back pioneering research breakthroughs, as well as participants in the Hawaiian Walk for Women's Cancer, whose fundraising directly contributed to supporting this research.

"There's still a long way to go and years of rigorous testing before this could be available to people in clinical trials, but I know that with people like you supporting local research and driving us forward, we'll get there together."

## A tribute from your Ride family to Carol Abramo

**It is with a heavy heart and deep sadness that we share the loss of a much-loved member of our Ride family.**

On Thursday August 27th, Carol Abramo passed away after a courageous 6-year battle with breast cancer.

Carol was a huge supporter of the Ride and a strong advocate for cancer research. With her infectious smile and never-give-up attitude, she has inspired countless riders and members of the community.

Carol was as kind as she was tough.



Even while undergoing cancer treatment, Carol rode in the 2017 Ride to Conquer Cancer on an electric bike along with her team, 'You Can Do Fit.'

The following year, her treatment left her too ill to ride on her own.

But in one of the most awe-inspiring moments in the history of the Ride, Carol decided that nothing would stop her from taking part in the Ride - not even cancer. That weekend, she rode in the event in the front of a trishaw ridden by her son, Dean.

Carol will be missed for her kindness, wonderful hugs, and endless determination. A fierce advocate for cancer research, your support for the Ride will help to carry on Carol's incredible legacy, in the hope that, one day, we will not have to lose another friend or loved one to this terrible disease.

## You can support cancer research through the MACA Cancer 200.

Taking up the 200km challenge in the MACA Cancer 200 Ride for Research isn't the only way to support the Perkins. You can simply donate today at [cancer200.org.au](http://cancer200.org.au)

## Sue shares her 2020 vision for your family

Following a lifelong interest in medical research, quilter extraordinaire, Sue Rule, was recently inspired by the passion of Perkins researchers in a newsletter (just like the one you're reading right now) and made the incredible decision to leave a future gift to the Perkins in her Will.

The Essex-born grandmother came to WA with her husband, Linton, as 'Ten Pound Poms' and their daughter Catherine was born in Perth.

Like so many of us, Sue is no stranger to the impacts of chronic disease.

"When I was young I dreamed of becoming a researcher and finding a cure for cancer.

I even briefly worked in toxicology before becoming a medical secretary," Sue said.

Sue is especially interested in supporting a local medical research institute that serves those in WA.

"The fact that the Perkins is here in Perth is very important to me. I feel particularly passionate about it because it's here."

It's thanks to the vision of people like Sue that the Perkins can continue this vital work into finding better treatments for devastating diseases.

"My vision for the future is that whatever money comes out of my estate is used where it is of most value to help with the advancement and quality of our health."

We would like to acknowledge our wonderful Silver Linings. When you let us know that you intend to leave a lasting legacy to advance medical research, you join our Silver Lining Club. We then keep you informed of breakthroughs, invite you to special research events and send you magazines like this one – just to say thank you for your foresight and generosity.



If you'd like to find out how you can leave a Gift in your Will that will help WA families in the future, please call Ann on **08 6151 0745** or email [Ann@perkins.org.au](mailto:Ann@perkins.org.au)

## Your small steps lead to big breakthroughs

**Plucky 72-year-old cancer survivor, Dianne Wynyard, will tell you that age is no barrier to what you can achieve.**

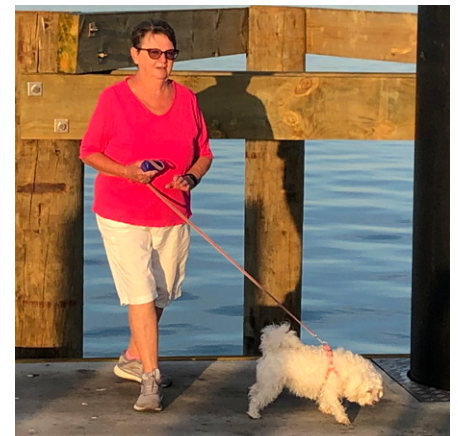
The New Zealand woman has captured the hearts of the town of Russell in the Bay of Islands, during her daily training walks for the 2020 Hawaiian Women's Cancer Challenge, which supports groundbreaking women's cancer research at the Perkins.

Dianne was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2016 and credits her consistent walk training with helping her recover physically from her tough treatment.

"It's such a wonderful cause and I couldn't think of any more worthwhile reason to get my feet walking. As a by-product of this I have already improved my health considerably," Dianne said.

"I have clots on my lungs from radiation and did have a lot of trouble breathing but because of my walking I now have little trouble at all."

Dianne has been humbled by the support she has received from her local community as she and her trusty walk partner Shaanti the Maltese cross have built up their regular walks from small beginnings to more than 20km.



It's we who should be thanking you, Dianne – you and all our amazing Walkers who hit the streets once a year to raise funds for WA women's cancer research. We think you're all superstars!

## You can help beat women's cancers.

The 2020 Women's Cancer Challenge was held in September over 7 days to represent the 1 in 7 women diagnosed with breast cancer. You can support women's cancer research today by donating at [WalkForWomensCancer.org.au](http://WalkForWomensCancer.org.au)



# We're looking forward to seeing you again in 2021!

COVID-19 has kept us apart this year, but we can't wait to invite you to our upcoming events and see you in person! Here's what we have planned for you next year...



**Hawaiian Walk for Women's Cancer**

Physical event returns



**MACA Cancer 200 Ride for Research**

10th birthday ride



**BioDiscovery Community Days**

Be a scientist for the day



**Perkins Community Q&As**

Starting in February on the topic of Melanoma



**Meet the Researcher**

Hear from the experts in our virtual talks



**Community Tour & Tea**

Join us for an exclusive tour of the Perkins labs

**Thank you for your continued support throughout 2020.**

Without you, there would be no medical research.  
And without medical research, there are no breakthroughs.



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## Get in touch

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