

# PERKINS NEWS

OCTOBER 2022



HARRY PERKINS INSTITUTE  
OF MEDICAL RESEARCH

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

# A message from the Director

**What a pleasure it is to introduce you to the Perkins' third, annual issue of our Gratitude magazine!**

This magazine celebrates the strong, lasting bonds formed with people like you supporting our research.

As you are probably aware by now, government support for medical research at a state and federal level is not sufficient to support the number of research projects requiring funding. I think you would agree that having the means to only fund one in ten grants is not good enough.

What does bring incredible peace of mind is that the shortfall in research funding at the Perkins is shored up with your generous support. In fact, in 2021, donations to the Perkins made up 55% of the total budget. Thank you for your contribution. What would we do without you?

So, to celebrate you and your commitment to research and your support for the future health of all West Australians, we have compiled a magazine full of stories about Perkins fans just like you.

I am particularly proud of the collective efforts of all involved in awarding our first ever Safe Harbour Fellow.

The Safe Harbour Project is of the utmost importance to the future of medical research. It's designed to provide three years of funding for early-to-mid-career researchers when they



are at their most vulnerable. Protecting the next generation of researchers so they do not leave the industry whilst they build runs on the board is an important and lasting legacy.

Your backing of this project has been reassuring. Supporting young researchers, especially women is something that will make a profound difference in the future. Who knows, one of the brilliant young scientists you're helping protect may make the next discovery in cardiovascular disease, uncover a new disease gene or pioneer a new cancer treatment. Profound, life changing work... made possible because of you.

So, whether you walked for women's cancer, volunteered in our offices, attended an event, donated to an appeal, left a gift in your Will or raised funds on your bike – thank you for supporting better health outcomes for all West Australians.

I hope you enjoy reading about yourselves and what you have achieved this year. We simply could not do what we do without **you**.

With much gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Leedman'.

**Professor Peter Leedman A0**  
Perkins Director, Researcher, Doctor, Donor

## YOUR TAX UPDATE



**Many of you gave generously to our End of Financial Year Appeal. In fact, it broke records! We thought you might like to see some stats:**



**812**  
SUPPORTERS



**823**  
GIFTS



**\$494,438**  
RAISED

**Thank you so much, this gave a lot of researchers peace of mind.**



# Your understanding leads to new support

**It's rare to have a long-term, generous supporter that gives to research that is not cancer or heart disease. But Mr R is a unique donor. Mr R has quietly been supporting Perkins researchers in the areas of rare genetic disease and now epigenetics. He does so in the memory of his late wife and son.**

Mr R, who chooses to remain anonymous, has had a long interest in epigenetics and recently enquired if there was work he might fund in this area – alongside his commitment to rare genetic disease research.

Enter Dr Christian Pflueger, who at the time of Mr R's enquiry was days from becoming a dad for the second time. Christian was taken aback when Mr R came back after reviewing an overview of his research to say that he would support him. In fact, a donation was sent through almost immediately.

"I couldn't believe it," said Christian. "I was grateful for the attention as epigenetics is not the easiest research area to understand. But Mr R approached it not only generously but with an understanding of the science and an interest in my work."

Christian was also able to include a very special addition to his letter of thank you to Mr R, a pic of his lovely family with his beautiful new son, Nirvaan Matthias Pflueger.



On behalf of the Pflueger and Perkins family, thank you Mr R for your thoughtful gift and for supporting the "tough ones!"



## YOU'VE MADE SPARKS FLY FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

For many years, Catholic Priest and Swanbourne local, Father Geoff Beyer has been a donor and supporter of the Perkins.

But in 2020, Father Beyer made the decision to formalise his commitment to medical research and became a member of our monthly giving club, The Spark.

Over the past two years, Father Beyer has helped medical breakthroughs come to life, and improved the outlook of those facing disease, by making a manageable monthly gift to the Perkins.

Father Beyer says, "My motivation for supporting the Perkins arises from the fact that I enjoy good health and it is my hope that others may benefit from the research being undertaken at the Institute."



As a valued Spark member, Father Beyer is kept informed of the latest medical breakthroughs by The Spark's Supporter Care Coordinator, Jenny Grice.

*If you'd like more info on how to join The Spark, get in touch on 08 6151 1220 or [jenny@perkins.org.au](mailto:jenny@perkins.org.au)*

## If not now, when? If not you, who?

**Job security in medical research is challenging. Researchers rely heavily on an insufficient Australian grant system that favours scientists with a track record over those new to the industry.**

And with only one in every ten grants being successful, it can be hard to stay motivated. If grants are hard to come by – even for the most seasoned researcher – what can be done to ensure a whole generation of up-and-coming researchers do not disappear?

Early-to-mid-career researchers or EMCRs have 10-15 years of in-depth training and tertiary learning behind them. They are a culmination of dedication, determination, drive, and a financial investment (both private and government) of at least \$500,000.

And EMCRs are leaving the industry and WA in droves. The reasons for this exodus range from lack of job security, to being headhunted elsewhere, to lack of flexibility in juggling family and career. And women have it even harder – with research showing a gender bias leading to less opportunities and advancement.

The Perkins is committed to keeping the next generation of superstar researchers right here in WA through a very special project called Safe Harbour.



Safe Harbour is a group of extraordinary supporters dedicated to protecting EMCRs by funding three-year fellowships. This provides young researchers with peace of mind and gives them time to work on becoming more confident and competitive.

The first Safe Harbour Fellow has been appointed. Dr Olivier Clement investigates the molecular mechanisms that control memory formation, storage, and recollection.

And we are proud to announce that we are very close to funding a second Safe Harbour Fellow, thanks to your kind generosity.

*If you would like to learn more about how you can support and protect young, scientific talent, please contact Key Relationship Manager, Shelley Mason at [shelley.mason@perkins.org.au](mailto:shelley.mason@perkins.org.au)*

## MEET THE HEART RESEARCHER FUNDED BY YOU

Over six years ago, a generous group of supporters pledged their commitment to funding world-class cardiovascular researchers at the Perkins. What followed was a rollercoaster ride of recruitment, COVID delays and border closures. Thankfully, the first of two fellowships has been awarded to the brilliant Dr Abdul Ildayhid.

Abdul is a cardiologist and researcher focused on using artificial intelligence algorithms to predict the likelihood of a heart attack before it happens, significantly increasing the chances of preventing it.

Abdul recently won the Best Abstract Award at the International Cardiac CT Conference in Las Vegas. Global competition was extremely high, and this award is an excellent and prestigious achievement.

Abdul's research is directly supported by many of you reading this magazine today. Your pledges over several years have had the ripple effect required to bring someone of his calibre to WA. We are so grateful for your investment in the future of cardio health.







## YOU'RE AT THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY

On Monday 22nd August, 150 community members visited the Perkins to attend the first live Community Q&A for 2022, **'Have we made the discovery of a generation?'**

Discussing the groundbreaking discovery of a drug that can dissolve plaque, Perkins community members listened to panellists Associate Professor Juliana Hamzah, Professor Shirley Jansen, John Barrington AM, amputee patient Trevor Jones, and host Miriam Borthwick, followed by an engaging Q&A from the audience.

The revolutionary drug discovery, spearheaded by Associate Professor Juliana Hamzah, has been designed specifically for Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD) but has transformational implications for the treatment of cardiovascular disease – one of the highest cost medical conditions in the world!

With one PAD-related amputation taking place every three hours in Australia, education around the disease, and support to advance this incredible breakthrough is vital.

Thank you to every member of the audience who attended the Q&A and to every supporter of the Perkins who continues to learn about medical research and advocate for the work we do. It is because of your donations and support that breakthroughs such as these are possible. Thank you!



**SCAN TO  
WATCH  
THE Q&A**



## SHARING THE FRUITS OF YOUR LABOUR

Meet one of the most incredible Perkins donors around. Veronica is one of our long-term donors. She is also an incredible gardener.

She lovingly tends a fruit grove at her home that includes an abundance of grapefruits and oranges, which she planted herself many years ago.

Every few weeks when her trees are in fruit, Veronica loads up her little yellow hatchback to the roof with citrus and drives to the Perkins to gift the lot to staff and researchers.



As a tribute to Veronica and her amazing generosity, the Community Engagement team at the Perkins recently created a non-alcoholic 'Mocktail' with her fruit and christened it 'The Veronica'.

Thank you so much Veronica for your fruit and your friendship!

### "The Veronica"

The recipe below makes a pitcher of punch!

- 1 ½ cups of grapefruit juice
- ½ cup of lime juice
- 1 ½ cups of dry ginger ale or lemonade
- 3 handfuls of ice

Add together and stir. Pour into glasses and garnish with a slice of orange or pink grapefruit. Serve.



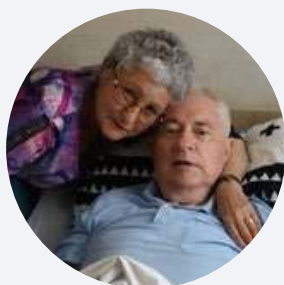
# You've been partying with the Perkins!



**Wellard resident and Perkins supporter, Helen Herbert, was celebrating more than a milestone when she held her 70th birthday party earlier this year.**

As someone with a passion for medical research – after tragically losing her husband, brother and sister, all to cancer – Helen decided to ask for donations to the Perkins in lieu of gifts at her 70th birthday party.

Helen said, “I made this choice partly because I’ve thoroughly enjoyed visiting the Perkins when I’ve previously toured with the Red Hat Ladies. But also, because my husband suffered four brain tumours that eventually took his life five years ago, all before I had Stage 3 Follicular Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma and suffered from total organ failure from a bug following the chemotherapy.



“Reaching the age of 70 was so important to me as the doctors told my family that I wouldn’t survive. And I’m here today, stronger than ever! I don’t need anything material, so it was important to me to celebrate my 70th by doing something good and that’s why I chose to fundraise for the Perkins.”

Thank you so much, Helen for including the Perkins in your very special 70th birthday celebrations!



*Scan here to transform your birthday into a breakthrough!*



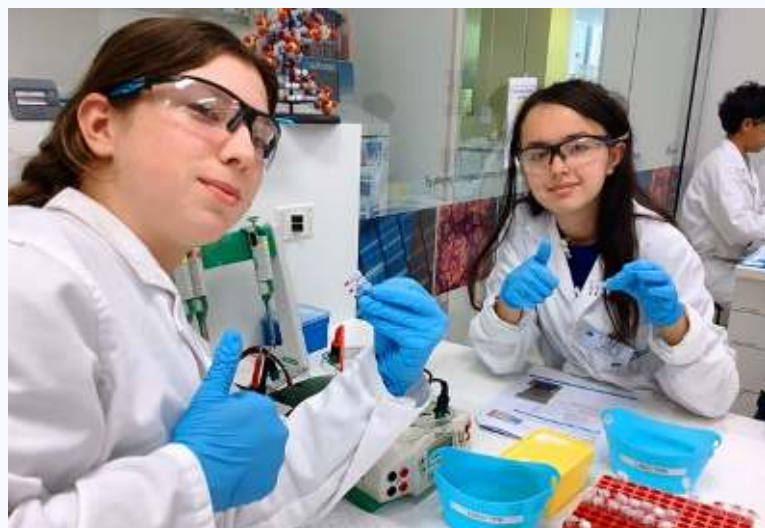


## Fabulous Fogarty providing new opportunities

**It is no secret that the Lotterywest BioDiscovery Centre hosts some incredible extra-curricular school programs for budding scientists and eager minds.**

But thanks to the incredible generosity of the Fogarty Foundation, this ability to explore STEM in a real-life setting has been further extended to students less likely to have these opportunities.

Since 2018, the **Fogarty Foundation Sponsored Perkins Profs Intensive Program** has enabled an additional 32 students each year to come through the Lotterywest BioDiscovery Centre, outside of the usual after school hours and during school excursions, in a special four-day intensive format.



A special mention must be given to Annie Fogarty for championing this program and playing an instrumental role in connecting multiple schools to the Perkins. Thank you, Annie and the Fogarty Foundation for making this program possible!

## Super-star science teacher champions the Perkins

**Head of Science at Perth Modern School, Mr Ant Meczes, has been championing the Lotterywest BioDiscovery Centre at the Perkins since its inception.**

Having brought countless classes through the after school and day programs for many years, Ant has become a cherished member of the Perkins community.



Because of Ant's passion and education for STEM and teaching in a 'real-life' environment, Perth Modern School students have had the ability to learn directly from Perkins researchers and immerse themselves in a working lab environment.

Perkins Community Education Manager, Judi Lane says, "Ant is outright fabulous! It's so encouraging to see how supportive he is of both the students and the program."

Thank you for your ongoing support of the Lotterywest BioDiscovery Centre, Ant! And an even bigger thank you for encouraging an interest in medical research in the next generation.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Perkins honours student and Perth Mod Alumni, Karrison Driver, was so inspired by his visit to the Lotterywest BioDiscovery Centre as a year 9 student that he chose to pursue a career in Biomedical Science.

Karrison is now in Professor Nigel Laing's team working to create a model for a rare genetic disorder that causes patients to struggle with walking and balance!



# Welcome HBF to the Perkins Family

**Congratulations to Chair of Melanoma Discovery at the Perkins, Professor Jonas Nilsson, who successfully pitched to HBF's Community Engagement Committee to become an HBF Community Partnership recipient.**

Jonas will be funded for the next three years to set up a biobank of melanoma tumour samples that he and his lab will use to help advance our knowledge of melanoma and test new, promising treatments.

We are indebted to HBF for supporting Jonas's vision and we look forward to providing the organisation, its staff and members with updates and share with them any breakthroughs that they have made possible. We will of course keep you updated too.

As many of you know, Jonas is a world expert in melanoma. He and his family now call Western Australia home after moving here from Sweden.



Jonas's wife and lab partner, Lisa and their two daughters will be travelling home for a white Christmas. So, while we are all sweltering, the Nilssons will be knee deep in snow. Look out for updates on Jonas's work later this year as we feature his work in our Christmas campaign.



## Big hearts give to big heart projects

**You will be hearing a lot about cardiovascular research at the Perkins. It's a significant part of the work we do. We also have some of the brightest cardiovascular research minds in Australia right here in WA.**

The cardiovascular researchers have devised several audacious goals that they are well on the way to meeting. They are to:

- **PREVENT** heart attacks before they happen by using artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to predict who they're likely to affect
- **STOP** amputations due to poor circulation through a targeted novel treatment
- **CREATE** new heart valves that never need replacing and replicate your own.

Each of these projects is underway but they need your support.

If we can succeed at one of these projects, it will be game changing. If we succeed at all three, it will be life changing.

Long-term partner and supporter of our heart research is Mineral Resources. This year, they have helped fund Biomedical Engineer, Dr Elena Juan Pardo. Elena has advanced her research into 3D-printed heart valves which do not need invasive surgery or replacing. These valves encourage the body's cells to grow a framework around an engineered, biomaterial structure that eventually absorbs back into the body. The aim is to replace the faulty heart valve with one customised to and manufactured by the patient.



Thank you, Mineral Resources, for being an early adopter of a project that could change the way we treat heart disease forever.





## Honouring your family and loved ones

In September of last year, Perkins supporters Mr Doug Brenkley, his daughter Debbie and son-in-law Henry attended a Perkins Community Q&A which focused on the importance of nature in medical research. Speaking that evening was Perkins Associate Professor Pilar Blancafort whose 2020 discovery, along with Dr Ciara Duffy, made global news when honeybee venom was found to kill aggressive breast cancer cells.

Doug himself had enjoyed a connection to the Perkins for many years. A retired farmer, he was familiar with Mr Harry Perkins AO – the Institute's inaugural Chairman – and Wesfarmers' role as the Institute's founding sponsor. His son-in-law Henry had signed on to participate in the 2022 New Town Toyota Walk for Women's Cancer, an event directly benefiting women's cancer research at the Perkins.

But, tragically, it was the passing of his eldest daughter Debbie to breast cancer in March of this year, that ultimately inspired Doug and his family to make an annual gift, for five years, in support of Associate Professor Blancafort's laboratory.

In responding to the Brenkley family's generosity, Associate Professor Blancafort noted the gratitude and emotion that she and her colleagues were feeling.



"My team and myself will continue to work enthusiastically and give our best to produce outcomes that hopefully make a change for many families living with this disease, or with the memory of this disease.

"I often think some people living with cancer have no time and that is why we do translational research, which has real-world applications. So hopefully we will ignite some results which will help many other families."

Thank you Doug, Jean, Leonie and Henry for your amazing support. We are so grateful for the faith that you have placed in Associate Professor Blancafort and her team.

## The un-BEE-lievable Beards

Jenny and Allan Beard are long standing volunteers who first came to the Perkins when their daughter, Kylie, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2019, and became a keen participant, activist and ambassador for the New Town Toyota Walk for Women's Cancer.

Kylie devastatingly lost her battle to cancer in April 2021, one day before her 45th birthday. However, Jenny and Allan's commitment to the Perkins remained, and they've continued to support medical research and actively volunteer for both for the Walk and the MACA Cancer 200 Ride for Research over the past few years.

"We always feel at home at the Perkins and know that our efforts, along with everyone else whether it be volunteers or participants in events, is helping to continue medical research here in Western Australia.

"Kylie was very focused on the honeybee venom research for triple negative breast cancer, and needless to say – it's our focus too!"

Thank you, Jenny and Allan for all that you do. You are un-BEE-lievable!



# You lift our spirits with your commitment to cancer



## Meet Carrie, Caroline and Sandie, Team Rosebuddies, the 2023 Ambassadors of the New Town Toyota Walk for Women's Cancer.

These three friends joined the Walk 8 years ago to support Carrie after her breast cancer diagnosis.

Carrie counts herself as one of the lucky ones as she was diagnosed at the very early stages and after a lumpectomy and a course of radiation, she was given the all clear.

Sandie's husband Len, is a cancer survivor too, having been diagnosed with prostate cancer a few years ago.

Two years ago, Caroline sadly lost her husband, Rob to pancreatic cancer, five months after his diagnosis. Rob was their early morning taxi service and was always waiting at the end of the walk with gin and tonics in hand ready to toast the trio as they crossed the finish line.

The ladies support the Walk because they are committed to a future where cancer is treatable and beatable, and they believe that medical research is the way to achieve this.

On the day of the Walk, the Rosebuddies read an African blessing that brought a tear to many eyes and served as motivation to conquer the 35 or 42km trek. We have included it here.

2023 will be the tenth birthday of the Walk for Women's Cancer. Originally a two-day, 60km route with an overnight tent stay, in 2015 the one-day format was introduced.

Next year, many of our incredible Walkers will be celebrating a decade of walking and fundraising as part of this heartfelt event. And we will be celebrating along side them.

You can join the fight against women's cancers. Sign up today at [WalkForWomensCancer.org.au](http://WalkForWomensCancer.org.au)

### *African Blessing*

*Walk tall, walk well, walk safe, walk free  
And may harm never come to thee.  
Walk wise, walk good, walk proud, walk true  
And may the sun always smile on you.  
Walk prayer, walk hope, walk faith, walk light  
And may peace always guide you right.  
Walk joy, walk brave, walk love, walk strong  
And may life always give you song.*



**New Town Toyota**

**Thank you, New Town Toyota,  
for your generosity and support.**

The Walk has a new title sponsor, New Town Toyota. Not only did Principal Dealer of both New Town and Kalamunda Toyota, Joe Zito support and speak at the Walk, he was also at the starting line alongside other walkers.

Joe knows what it is to lose someone you love to breast cancer. He lost his wife, Sandra to the disease in 1999 when his two daughters were just 7 and 5 years old.



# Even when it's beating you down, you rise up to beat cancer



**Our riders are such a phenomenal bunch of people. You all have such heart and deep connections to the cause. None more so than Ryan.**

Ryan Glossop is one of the incredible returning riders taking on the 2-day, 200km MACA Cancer 200 Ride for Research, benefitting the Perkins.

Ryan was at his kids' school camp when one of the other dads noticed a spot on his neck. It turned out to be melanoma. After multiple attempts by doctors and specialists to get the boundaries clear, he was referred to an incredible team at the Perkins, the WA Kirkbride Melanoma Advisory Service (WAKMAS). They bring together a team of experts to the Perkins to review patients with some of the hardest to treat melanoma.

In Ryan, they found multiple abnormalities and even more hidden melanoma in his neck and back, which was removed. He has an impressive scar and some back pain, but, as he says, "I'd take that over the alternative any day."

Ryan is committed to giving back to the people who helped save his life.

"I joined the Ride in 2021 as a way of giving back to the Perkins and WAKMAS. It really filled my cup with positivity. Meeting people, hearing their stories and being around such a supportive community of riders is both healing and inspiring. I want my family and friends to experience it this year so I'm starting a team – to give back and pay it forward."

The MACA Cancer 200 brings together corporate and community teams to tackle one of the biggest challenges to cancer research – funding. Last year, the Ride made a staggering \$7.1M. This year, we want to smash that total. And if anyone can do it – it's you incredible riders who give their all for the cause.

Discover more about the MACA Cancer 200 Ride for Research at [cancer200.org.au](https://cancer200.org.au)

## YOU'RE PREVENTING THE 'AUSTRALIAN' CANCER

**Did you know, 2 in 3 Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer by the age of 70?**

This alarming statistic is one that plays constantly on the minds of many of the researchers here at the Perkins.

Most of us will get something burnt off our skin in our lifetimes, some of us will be unlucky enough to have a melanoma. That is why your support of our melanoma research is so gratefully received.





# Dates for your calendar



## **MACA Cancer 200 Ride for Research** Sat 15 & Sun 16 October

**Join Australia's most loved cycling fundraiser to help beat cancer.**

You can join a 1500-strong group of dedicated riders in the MACA Cancer 200 Ride for Research in the fight against cancer.

On the weekend of 15 & 16 October 2022, you'll line up at Optus Stadium and ride 200km down to Mandurah where you'll camp overnight (tents and dinner are on us!). And then you'll ride back up to Perth the next day – finishing back up at Optus Stadium. This event is much loved and life-changing. Will you help beat cancer on your bike this year?

Register today at [cancer200.org.au](https://cancer200.org.au)



## **Wesfarmers Harry Perkins Oration 2022**

**Tuesday 8 November | 6:30 – 7:30pm**

Hear from Professor Alex Brown about his career in Aboriginal health in the provision of public health services, health care policy and research, infectious diseases and chronic disease care.

Get your free tickets at [perkins.org.au/events](https://perkins.org.au/events)



## **Supporter Sundowner**

**Wednesday 30 November | 5:30 – 7:00pm**

Please join us for an exclusive end of year event at the Perkins to say THANK YOU for all of your incredible support in 2022.

RSVP by Friday 18 November at [perkins.org.au/events](https://perkins.org.au/events)



## **New Town Toyota Walk for Women's Cancer** Saturday 29 April 2023

**Want to support WA women's cancer research right here at the Perkins?**

You can help beat women's cancers this year by walking 35km in the New Town Toyota Walk for Women's Cancer on Saturday 29 April 2023, with 100% of donations supporting women's cancer, including breast and ovarian cancer research at the Perkins.

Register today at [WalkForWomensCancer.org.au](https://WalkForWomensCancer.org.au)