

Perkins News

SPRING EDITION 2026



“You're ensuring the future of
medical research is bright.”



HARRY PERKINS INSTITUTE
OF MEDICAL RESEARCH

Welcome to your latest Perkins News.

This Spring edition is filled with stories that remind me what's possible when passionate people like you support medical research.

I'm excited to share the launch of the Biota Pipeline in Busselton. This innovative project is exploring the disease-fighting properties of WA's unique biodiversity, including compounds, found in sea sponges collected from beneath the Busselton Jetty, that may one day play a role in new cancer treatments.

You'll also read about the lasting legacy of Wendy Ryan, whose generous bequest is helping advance pancreatic cancer research through the Wendy Ryan Fellowship. We're delighted to feature Wendy and her beloved dog Miffy on the cover. Her story is a beautiful reminder that one person's generosity can continue changing lives well into the future.

We also shine a light on the challenges facing many of our PhD and Master's students. Through the Lifeboat Program, people like you are helping keep talented young researchers in science despite increasing financial pressures, ensuring future breakthroughs aren't lost due to hardship.

And much more!

Whether you're supporting the next generation of researchers, investing in groundbreaking discoveries or leaving a legacy, every contribution helps move us closer to a healthier future.

Thank you for being part of that journey.



Professor Peter Leedman AO
CEO, Researcher,
Doctor and Donor

Your rare disease research champion.

Hope for families affected by rare disease has received a significant boost with the appointment of Perkins and UWA Professor Gina Ravenscroft as the inaugural Dr Patricia Kailis Endowed Chair in Rare Diseases at The University of Western Australia (UWA). The endowed Chair honours the legacy of the late Dr Patricia Kailis AM OBE, whose pioneering work in genetic disease research changed the lives of countless WA families.

Made possible through the generosity of the Kailis family and friends, the Stan Perron Charitable Foundation, UWA and the Children's Health & Disability Foundation, the Chair represents an enduring investment in a future where more families can find answers, treatments and hope.

Gina is internationally recognised for her groundbreaking rare disease genetics work. Across her career, she has helped uncover the genetic causes of rare conditions and provided life-changing answers to families who've often spent years searching for them.

Gina will continue the work started by Dr Kailis, accelerating research that can improve diagnosis, treatment and outcomes for families across Australia.

"I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to continue Patricia's work. The families we work with inspire us every day, and I'm excited about what we can achieve together as we search for answers and pursue better treatments for rare diseases."

- Professor Gina Ravenscroft



How you can help keep young researchers afloat.

Rising cost-of-living pressures are having a profound impact on the next generation of researchers. Many PhD students receive university stipends that fall well below average full-time earnings, leaving some struggling to cover essential expenses such as rent, utilities and groceries. At the same time, they spend long hours working in the lab before dedicating additional time to their studies and thesis writing.

For some students, the **Perkins Lifeboat Program** has become a vital safety net. It's a stark reality that talented young researchers, dedicating their lives to finding cures and improving health outcomes, are increasingly facing financial hardship and, in some cases, food insecurity. Supporting these emerging scientists is not only about helping individuals through difficult times, it's also about ensuring Australia retains the brilliant minds needed to drive future medical breakthroughs.

With more than 50 PhD and Master's students at the Perkins, Lifeboat provides financial assistance to those whose research journey is at risk due to financial or personal

challenges. Entirely funded through the generosity of supporters, the program offers **Lifeboat Opportunity Grants** of up to **\$5,000 per year for up to three years**, helping students focus on their research with greater security and peace of mind.

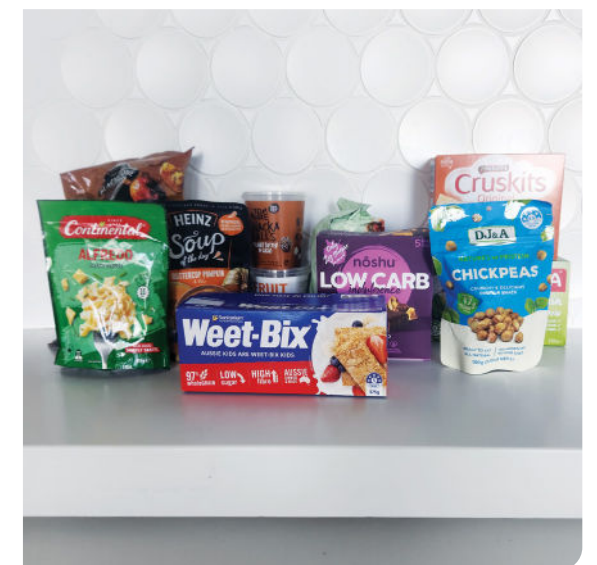
At its heart, Lifeboat exists to ensure talented researchers aren't forced to leave science due to financial pressures. By keeping the next generation of scientists afloat, the program helps advance the discoveries that could transform lives and improve the health of generations to come.

If you're considering supporting the Perkins Lifeboat program please contact Kate Quinn at kate.quinn@perkins.org.au.



Did you know?

Perkins has a Food Pantry stocked through Institute support and community donations. It provides essential pantry staples to anyone at the Perkins experiencing food insecurity, so no one goes hungry. **Each Christmas, collections are accepted in the Perkins North foyer to support the pantry. If you'd like to help, please consider donating non-perishable food items this December.** Your contribution will help support members of our Perkins community when they need it most.



Your peek into what's at the heart of Jamie's research.



In July, we welcomed Dr Jamie Bellinge to the Perkins as Leader of the Cardiovascular Science and Diabetes (CVSD) Program. His work is focused on detecting cardiovascular disease earlier, using powerful molecular imaging technologies. But what drove him to research in the first place?

What made you want to become a researcher?

Research is an important part of my career that evolved quite naturally. I come from a family of healthcare professionals and scientists, where curiosity and asking questions was always valued. Medical research satisfies my personal curiosity to understand why things happen. It allows me to channel that curiosity into something meaningful, doing good things for patients and the community.

Who have been your mentors?

I've drawn inspiration from many people, rather than a single mentor. Those who have influenced me most are probably the ones who never told me what career I should pursue but encouraged me to find one I genuinely enjoy and pursue that relentlessly.

Dr Seuss is a great mentor to anyone. If you haven't read *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* – you must! The real mentors were those who relayed the same message: be curious and find your own path. That philosophy has ultimately

led me here. There are few things I find more enjoyable than working with smart, motivated people to discover and invent new ways to diagnose and treat the diseases that devastate our communities.

Nuclear medicine can play a powerful role in diagnosing and treating disease. Your research is using it to detect cardiovascular disease earlier. How did you get here?

I can only blame my supervisors, Professor Carl Schultz and Associate Professor Roslyn

Francis, who introduced me to this exciting field of medicine during my PhD. After seeing its capabilities, I was hooked. Nuclear medicine allows us to understand the early molecular stages of disease pathology, well before disease shows up on traditional scans and before patients have symptoms. This sensitivity is its strength, and we can harness it to detect disease very early and develop treatments accordingly.

What I really love about it is its multi-disciplinary environment, involving chemistry, physiology, pathophysiology, physics and clinical medicine. That's an exciting environment to work in. It also enables access to a breadth of tools to help understand diseases, from molecular chemistry to advanced image processing, through to AI, drug discovery and treatments.

Failure is an essential part of research and life! Can you share a time you experienced failure in your career?

Ah, which one! I like to think of myself as a 'two (or more) times the charm' kind of person. Almost everything I truly value in my professional life, I've had to apply for twice, including medical school, jobs and PhD programs. I was also only successful on my second application for the Fulbright Scholarship,

which ultimately took me to Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital for my postdoctoral fellowship.

When faced with failure, I think there are two options: pivot or try again. Knowing when to persist and when to change direction is probably one of the most important lessons I've learnt in both research and life. Kenny Rogers has a good song about this!

What is your greatest achievement so far?

It has to be my wonderful family. I am blessed to have an extremely supportive family (headed by my beautiful wife!), who keep me grounded and are a constant source of motivation.

What is your hope for your research in the next five years?

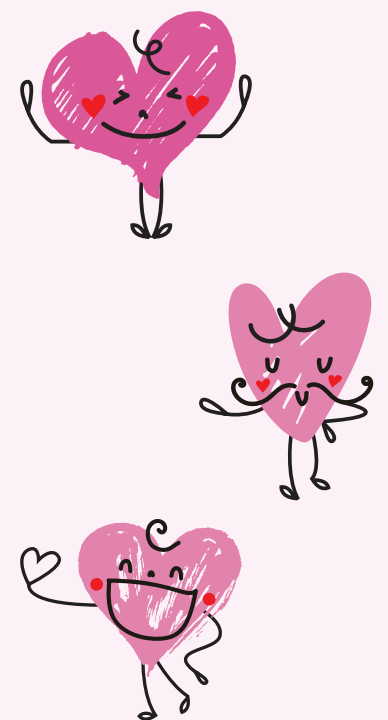
For my own program, I will develop a broader team of expertise, create capacity, and build infrastructure to support an anticipated 20-year-long local research program. This program will advance the understanding of cardiovascular diseases, improve diagnostic and predictive capabilities and help design new preventative treatments and therapies for these devastating conditions.

For WA, I hope to see our beautiful state capitalise on its extraordinary and

unique capabilities in the imaging and cardiovascular disease space. I want to help facilitate local research capacity and support emerging researchers in our field, support innovation and collaboration and help our state truly lead the fields of cardiovascular research and molecular Imaging.

What are you passionate about outside of work?

I have a long list of hobbies, of which my passion far outweighs my skill. I am a mediocre but passionate golf player, I love cooking (specifically BBQ), and I enjoy spending time trying to intermittently resuscitate my garden. I am a proud Dockers supporter and am patiently waiting for their inevitable success!



You spoke. We listened.

Thank you for being part of a special group of people who passionately support medical research to give families healthier, longer lives together.

Earlier this year, we invited you to share your thoughts through our survey. Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond. Your feedback is a gift!

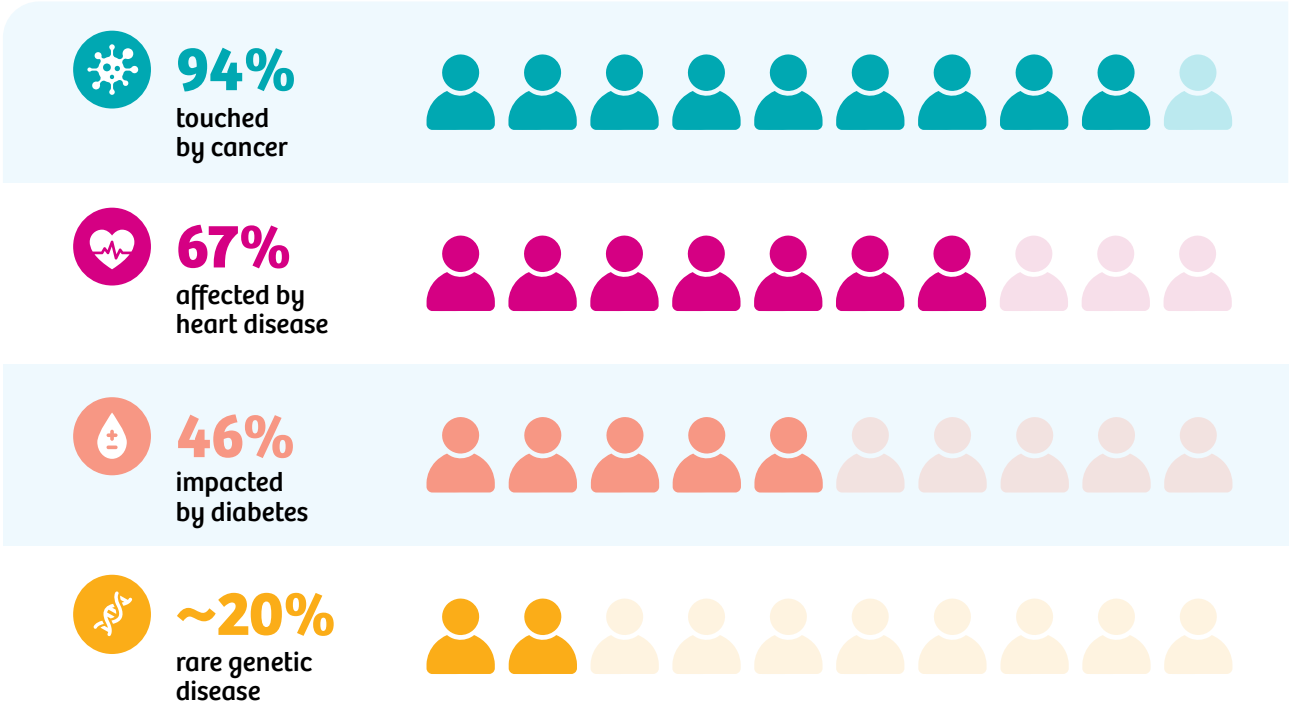
You told us that you support the Perkins because you want to create a healthier future for generations to come. You believe medical research is the key to improving diagnosis, developing kinder treatments and helping families spend more precious time together.

You also told us that you're passionate about the discoveries happening in our labs and understand the vital role research plays in transforming human health.



The diseases that matter to you.

As part of the survey, you kindly shared the impact of disease on your life.



What is important to you.

We value each and every one of you, and we're delighted to learn that the feeling is mutual. 100% of you said you would strongly recommend us to your family and friends. Thank you for your confidence, trust and belief in our work.

You believe medical research is the key to a healthier future.

We promise to keep searching for answers, pursuing breakthroughs and supporting the brilliant researchers working in our labs. We'll continue to keep you informed through Perkins News, email updates and our social media channels.

You told us you love science and the impact it can have on millions of lives.

We promise to continue to share research stories, discoveries and developments from both here in WA and around the world.

You told us that West Australian research matters.

We promise to continue championing and advocating for our researchers, ensuring they can pursue world-class discoveries right here in the state they call home.

Thank you for helping shape the future of the Perkins. Your support, insights and generosity are accelerating research that has the power to change lives.



Perkins staff Lynda, Jenny and Marnie welcoming generous supporters to a Tour & Tea.

The legacy you leave can change lives.



Wendy Ryan riding NEP Elvis, her beloved dressage horse of many years. Elvis and her dog Miffy (shown on the cover) continue to be cared for by her long-time friends, Ron and Dinah Fleming.

Through a generous Gift in her Will, Wendy Ryan is helping create a future with better outcomes for people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Wendy Ryan was a remarkable woman whose warmth, generosity and strength left a lasting impression on everyone fortunate enough to know her. Respected throughout her life for her professionalism, kindness and willingness to help others, Wendy approached everything she did with grace, determination and fabulous flair.

Outside of work, Wendy's greatest passion was horses. She found immense joy in the equestrian community and cherished the friendships, freedom and connection that came from spending time with the animals she loved so dearly.

When Wendy was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, she faced the challenges ahead with extraordinary courage. Despite the difficulties, she remained resilient and focused on the people and passions that mattered to her. Her strength and positivity inspired those around her.

Wendy's passing was a profound loss to her family, friends and colleagues. Yet her impact continues through an extraordinary act of generosity. By leaving a gift in her Will to the Perkins, Wendy established a legacy that will help drive vital pancreatic cancer research for years to come.

Wendy will be remembered for her kindness, strength, generosity and love of life. Her legacy is one of hope, ensuring that future generations may benefit from the discoveries her gift will help make possible.

Nature's gift to YOU: The Biota Pipeline.

Around 150 people from Busselton, Dunsborough, Bunbury and the wider Southwest gathered at Shelter Brewing Co in May to celebrate the launch of the Biota Pipeline, a groundbreaking Perkins-led initiative focused on harnessing the power of nature to discover new treatments for disease. The project was inspired by the vision and generosity of the late Chris Reichstein, whose legacy supports research into the therapeutic potential of WA's unique biodiversity.

The Biota Pipeline aims to accelerate the journey from discovery to treatment by identifying plants, marine organisms and microorganisms with disease-fighting properties, then testing promising compounds in the lab and progressing them to clinical application. The initiative brings together researchers from the Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research, The University of Western Australia, the WA Museum and community partners across WA.

Sea sponges and cancer research.

One of the exciting projects within the Biota Pipeline focuses on sea sponges collected from around WA, including beneath the Busselton Jetty. These remarkable marine organisms produce a range of unique chemical compounds that have demonstrated anti-inflammatory, antiviral and anticancer properties.

Emeritus Professor George Yeoh, his team at the Perkins and researchers from UWA are investigating whether compounds extracted from these sea sponges could be developed into new cancer treatments. The compounds have been isolated and are currently being tested against cancer cells, including liver cancer, to better understand their therapeutic potential.

The research highlights the extraordinary potential hidden within WA's natural environment. What begins as a marine sponge growing beneath Busselton Jetty could one day contribute to the development of life-saving treatments for cancer patients around the world.



Sea sponges.

"Hidden beneath Busselton Jetty is a living laboratory of extraordinary potential. The unique compounds found in local sea sponges may help us develop new ways to treat cancer, demonstrating that some of tomorrow's greatest medical breakthroughs could come from WA's own backyard."

- Emeritus Professor George Yeoh



Emeritus Professor George Yeoh in the lab.

Your 2026 TCS Sydney Marathon champions.

Support for medical research comes in many forms, including 103 dedicated runners at the 2026 TCS Sydney Marathon who raised awareness and over \$227,500 for medical research at the Perkins.

Meet your community champions who are out there driving support for breakthroughs that will give you and those you love longer, healthier and better lives.

Hale School: running for Ryan.

Since 2023, the Hale School community have been coming together to raise awareness and funds in memory of Ryan Murphy, a 17-year-old student who tragically passed away from glioblastoma.

In addition to the school's annual fundraising events, Headmaster Dean Dell'Oro and senior staff Jackie Hunt and Luke Bowyer ran in the 2026 TCS Sydney Marathon under the Team Perkins banner.

Backed by the incredibly generous Hale School community, including families of current students and staff, the trio crossed the start line having already raised their \$9,000 goal.

They went on to raise \$13,750, taking Hale's total funds raised for the Perkins since 2023 to an amazing \$120,000.



Post marathon smiles from Hale School's Dean Dell'Oro, Jackie Hunt, Tom Bourke-Finn and Luke Bowyer.

Mat Lyons: taking on challenge after challenge.

Long-term Perkins supporter and multi-year Rider in the MACA Cancer 200 Ride for the Perkins, Mat Lyons took on a new challenge in support of Perkins research – the 2026 TCS Sydney Marathon.

His motivation to support Perkins research is deeply personal, having been diagnosed with stage 4 metastatic melanoma in 2024 after suffering an unexpected seizure.

Despite intense treatment, he went on to complete the Ride that year and again in 2025, raising \$62,000 for Perkins cancer research.

That would be more than enough for most. Not Mat. In 2026, he registered for his seventh Ride, the Great Wall of China Marathon and the TCS Sydney Marathon.

In May, Mat with his wife Erin, Mat's rock and absolute legend in her own right, travelled to China to both complete the Great Wall of China Marathon Series. If you didn't know,



Mat completing the Great Wall of China Marathon Series.

it's 42.2km long and has 3200m of elevation to tackle!

Mat, Erin and their two boys then travelled to Sydney, where Mat completed the TCS Sydney Marathon, raising over \$15,600 for medical research at the Perkins. Absolutely legendary!



Oceane enjoying the view from the marathon finish line.

Oceane: proving every gift counts.

Oceane is a biomedical engineering Master's student based in Queensland who was inspired to join Team Perkins in the Sydney TCS Marathon after reading about the work

our own biomedical engineers do here at the Perkins – in particular the 3D printed heart valve project.

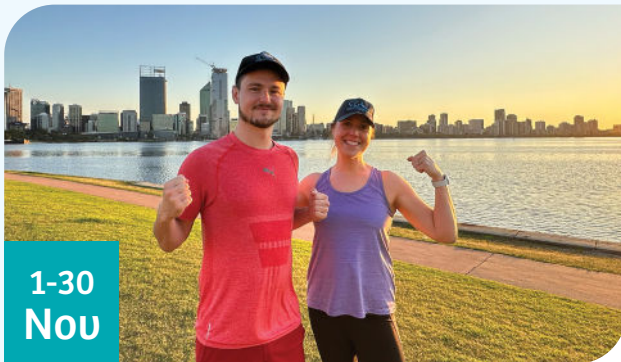
To reach her fundraising target, she put her skills as a mat Pilates teacher to good use, offering outdoor Pilates classes for an optional donation. With most donating around \$10 to her classes, it took patience and perseverance. But in the end, she raised \$3,040 to support medical research at the Perkins.

She has been so inspired by the research happening here that she's organised a visit to the Perkins labs on an upcoming trip to Perth. We're looking forward to hosting Oceane and showing her the impact of her incredible support.

Dates for your calendar.



Scan for more information.



1-30
Nov

Run For Research



11
Nov

**Wesfarmers
Harry Perkins Oration**



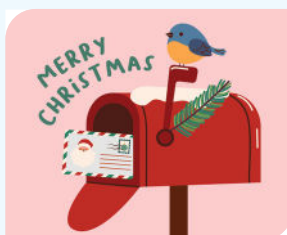
19
Nov

Silver Linings Lunch



21-22
Nov

Perkins Plunge



**Look out
for Danni's
story in your
mailbox**

1 Dec 2026



**Supporter
Sundowner**

3 Dec 2026



**Student
Food Pantry
Christmas
Collection**

1-18 Dec 2026



**Walk For
Women's
Cancer**

1 May 2027