

Young mum 'pays it forward'

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Melissa Tague, 32, first assumed a lump in her groin was an in-grown hair. It turned out to be melanoma which had spread to her lymph nodes.

"My family has no history of cancer, and I thought melanoma was something only people with bad freckles or the elderly got, so I was in complete shock," explains Melissa.

MIA Co-Medical Director, Professor Georgina Long, put Melissa on the OpACIN-Neo clinical trial led by a team in the Netherlands but with a large number of patients recruited from MIA. Melissa was given a modified combination of immunotherapies ipilimumab and nivolumab prior to surgery, in a bid to stop her Stage III melanoma progressing to Stage IV. Melissa was among the 70% of trial patients who responded.

"I thought melanoma was a death sentence, and I was so lucky to have the opportunity to go on this trial which has given me hope that I will see my two girls grow up."

Melissa now undergoes scans every three months to ensure the melanoma hasn't returned. She credits Professor Long for saving her life and is 'paying it forward' by participating in Melanoma March 2019 in Picton.

"Raising funds for melanoma research is vital as it ultimately ensures we are one step closer to finding a cure for melanoma," she said.

“ I thought melanoma was a death sentence, and I was so lucky to have the opportunity to go on this trial which has given me hope that I will see my two girls grow up. ”

MELISSA TAGUE,
melanoma patient



Go to melanomamarch.org.au to join Melissa and her family.



Welcome to our Summer edition of Momentum.

Summer is the time to rest, relax and catch up with family and friends. It is also the time to be extra vigilant when it comes to sun safety. At Melanoma Institute Australia, summer serves as a stark reminder of why we are here and why our research and community education efforts need to continue unabated.

I am proud of our progress so far, particularly over the last year. We dominated at the NSW Premier's Awards for Outstanding Cancer Research, with Professor Georgina Long awarded *Outstanding Cancer Researcher of the Year* and Professor Richard Scolyer *The Professor Rob Sutherland AO Make a Difference Award*. This came only weeks after Professor Long became the first woman and first Australian to lead the prestigious international Society for Melanoma Research.

Under the inspiring clinical leadership of our Co-Medical Directors, and the dedication and excellence of the research teams they lead, we are looking to build on those successes in 2019.

As always, families affected by melanoma continue to be at the heart of everything we do. With their support, and with the ongoing generosity of our donors and supporters, we are confident 2019 will see us make great strides towards reaching our goal of zero deaths from melanoma.

We dedicate this issue to our much loved Community Fundraising Manager, Helen Roche, who passed away last month, with her loving family at her bedside. Helen fought her own battle with cancer while dedicating her time at MIA to helping, supporting and caring for the many members of our fundraising community.

I would like to express my personal gratitude to Helen's family who provided Helen's colleagues with an opportunity to say goodbye in the days before Helen's passing. The warmth shown by Helen's family, at such a difficult time, was deeply appreciated.

Matthew Browne
Chief Executive Officer
Melanoma Institute Australia

Research update >



New research impacts patient care

It has been a busy few months for our researchers with conferences and international meetings both at home and abroad. More than 30 manuscripts have been published in international peer-reviewed journals. This research is having profound impacts on melanoma patients everywhere.

A large contingent of MIA's best researchers and clinicians were present in Melbourne, for the 2nd Australasian Melanoma Conference. A presentation from Professor Andrew Spillane and Associate Professor Alex Menzies discussed surgical and medical approaches to the management of loco-regional disease. Associate Professor Robyn Saw discussed follow-up investigations for high-risk melanoma patients, while Professor John Thompson presented a clinician's perspective of *The National Melanoma Guidelines*.

Important results from clinical trials that MIA contributed to were presented at the European Society of Medical Oncology in Germany. MIA was well represented with presentations at the Nordic Melanoma Meeting in Denmark and European Association of Dermato Oncology in Spain.

Our postgraduate students are making waves internationally with their research. At the Society for Melanoma Research Congress, Tuba Nur Gide presented some of her work in the plenary session, and Hansol Lee presented his research on the role specific immune cells play in the treatment of Stage IV melanoma with anti-PD-1 immunotherapy. Clinical researcher and medical oncologist, Dr Inês da Silva also presented two posters. We are exceptionally proud of their efforts.

We will be hosting one of fifteen 3D total-body imaging systems at the Poche Centre as part of a prestigious \$10 million grant from the Australian Cancer Research Foundation for the Australian Centre of Excellence in Melanoma Imaging and Diagnosis. The NSW arm of this cutting-edge national research effort is being led by Professor Graham Mann.

With the incredible work within our labs and in collaboration with our international colleagues, we are making great research strides towards our goal. But time doesn't stand still for our patients and their families. Until there are zero deaths from melanoma, we won't stand still either.

Professors Georgina Long and Richard Scolyer
Co-Medical Directors
Melanoma Institute Australia

New clinical trial treatment extends Greg's life

Clinical trials are extending the lives of some melanoma patients and helping researchers to close in on the goal of zero deaths from melanoma.

Greg Holterman is one of those patients, participating in a clinical trial after his Stage IV melanoma recurred.

Greg was originally diagnosed with advanced melanoma in September 2004, when he was only 23.

"I didn't know what to feel at first. It wasn't until a specialist mentioned the possibility of putting me on chemotherapy that I really realised what I was dealing with."

After surgery, radiation and a year of interferon, Greg thought he was in the clear. Then, five years later, melanoma was found again – this time in his lung. Surgery again left him free of melanoma, until April 2018 when he found lumps on his abdomen.

Greg was offered a place in an early phase clinical trial that combines pembrolizumab, an immunotherapy often used in the treatment of melanoma, with an experimental, injectable drug called SD-101.

SD-101 stimulates the immune system in a new way, to identify cancer cells and rally the immune system to attack them.

In August 2018 – four months after starting the clinical trial – Greg was told that he had no evidence of melanoma in his body.

"I am so lucky that research into melanoma has led to the development of new treatments, that have worked for me," said Greg, pictured with Assoc. Professor Alex Menzies.



“ I want everyone to have the chance to be successfully treated and cured. ”

GREG HOLTERMAN,
clinical trial patient

Mathers, bathers & fundraisers

Over 120 swimmers took to the open ocean at Balmoral Beach on the morning of Saturday 24 November to participate in the 2018 Erik Mather Swim.

Participants in the swim included males and females of all age groups from first time swimmers through to swimming veterans. The 2, 4 or 6 km open water swim was established by Erik in 1998 and was renamed in 2013 by the Balmoral Beach Club in Erik's memory.

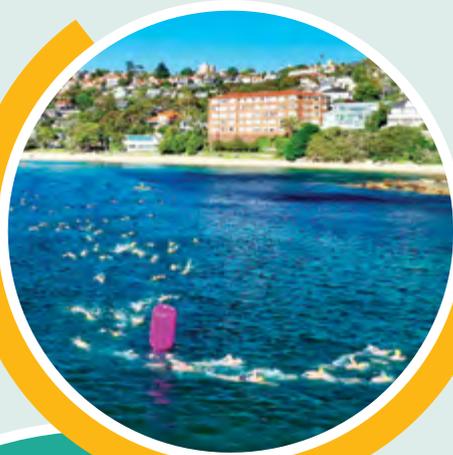
For the last 7 years, they have raised funds for Melanoma Institute Australia and this year they raised over \$25,000, smashing their target of \$15,000.

"Community events like this are the backbone to solving diseases like melanoma," said Matthew Browne, CEO MIA. "If you raise money you raise awareness, which then equals research. That research then turns into treatment and that treatment then turns into survival improvements."

Over the 80's and 90's, Erik Mather was the Balmoral Beach Club Captain, Club Champion and Iron Man Champion. He is remembered for his humour, involvement in the Beach Club activities and the encouragement he gave to all members to join in.

Melanoma Institute Australia would like to say thank you to Balmoral Beach Club, the Surf Life Savers and the Mather family for hosting such a memorable event and for their contribution toward a cure for melanoma.

If you or your workplace is interested in fundraising for MIA please contact **02 9911 7326** or email fundraise@melanoma.org.au



“ Over the 80's and 90's, Erik Mather was the Balmoral Beach Club Captain, Club Champion and Iron Man Champion. He is remembered for his humour, involvement in the Beach Club activities and the encouragement he gave to all members to join in. ”

Make a New Year's resolution worth keeping



STAYSUNSAFE
COM.AU

Every five hours, one Australian dies from melanoma — which is why it's so important to protect the skin you're in.

Sunburn is the greatest risk factor for melanoma – take the pledge to stay sun safe for 2019. Make your pledge at www.staysunsafe.com.au



MIA launches the SunSafe Student Ambassador Program

Melanoma Institute Australia has launched a new educational program to ensure teenagers are aware of the danger of melanoma and the importance of sun safety.

Students can come along to a one day course here at The Poche Centre where they will learn to develop their own sun safe presentation to take away and deliver to their peers. The program will be rolled out across the east coast of Australia in late 2019. Get your school involved! Find out more at www.melanoma.org.au



Speakers' Hub volunteers in demand

MIA's Speakers' Hub now has 14 volunteer presenters ready to share their unique melanoma stories and spread the word about living a sun-safe life.

After launching in 2017, speaking engagements doubled in 2018! Our sun-safe message is now being heard in NSW, VIC, QLD and even in WA!

"Your message is so important and valuable. One of my team members had a skin check after noticing a change in her skin. It is clear you have made a huge impact!" Vanessa from Rise & Shine Kindergarten.

If you would like a Speakers' Hub member to share their story and provide an overview about the life-saving research at MIA for your club, school, workplace, or fundraising event, please get in touch via www.melanoma.org.au.

John Day joins MIA for a trek in the Outback

After losing his son David to melanoma in August 2017, John Day took on the Larapinta Outback Trek to raise funds for melanoma research. Together with six others, John walked from the old Alice Springs Telegraph Station to the peak of Mount Sonder – a trail stretching 223 kilometres.

"Undertaking the Larapinta Trail has been a very significant event in my life," John said. He described the trek as "physically challenging but extremely rewarding." John believes the trek kept "David very much alive in my thoughts."

John raised \$8,000 and the group of six collectively raised an incredible \$40,000!

We are so grateful to those that took on this once in a lifetime experience and we can't wait to see who joins us for our next adventure...



Day in the life of Dr Chandra Adhikari

Dr Chandra Adhikari is the current recipient of the Jani Haenke Melanoma Pathology Fellowship, funded by the BB & A Miller Foundation.

Based at the Tissue Pathology and Diagnostic Oncology Department at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, she spends her days reviewing difficult and complex pathology cases.

“I would have to say that the most interesting part of my job is looking at the challenging consult cases that come across my desk, from patients being treated by MIA, in Australia and other parts of the world.

As a pathology fellow with MIA and a research affiliate with the University of Sydney, I have had the opportunity to participate in the MIA Translational Research Team and assist in tissue banking for MIA’s Biospecimen Bank. This year I have been focusing on the pathological samples from the OpACIN-Neo clinical trial, looking at the unique pathology of samples

from Stage III melanoma patients undergoing neoadjuvant combination immunotherapy.

The best part of this fellowship has been working with MIA’s exceptionally motivated multidisciplinary team who are working to make a difference and propel melanoma research forward every day.

As a pathologist, it was an invaluable experience working under the guidance and mentorship of MIA’s Co-Medical Director, Professor Richard Scolyer. His years of expertise were a phenomenal resource that gave me a world-class exposure to melanoma pathology.

After my fellowship ends in February, I would like to continue working as a pathologist and follow my passion for the subspecialty of dermatopathology.”



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DR CHANDRA ADHIKARI

Catherine’s legacy

After a life-long battle with a congenital heart defect, Catherine Dwan passed away in April 2017, leaving a gift to Melanoma Institute Australia in her Will.

Karyne and Catherine’s story.

Karyne met Catherine when they were both 11 years old. Through 38 years of friendship, Catherine got to know and love Karyne’s family. She even dated Karyne’s brother-in-law Steve. “We were hoping to be sisters-in-law but it didn’t work out. Catherine never married or had children. Her babies were her little dogs,” said Karyne.

Steve was diagnosed with melanoma in 2008. He fought it as much as he could but he lost his life six months later. Research wasn’t advanced enough at the time to help him. Catherine was devastated.

Several members of Karyne’s family have been affected by melanoma. She participates in Melanoma March each year to show support. Her mother-in-law is currently fighting melanoma and her step-sister Karen Phillips, passed away in November 2017 after a six year battle with the disease.

“Catherine was by my side this whole journey. I am honoured and humbled by her gift to help fund future research – she knows how much it means to my family,” reflected Karyne.



“ We were hoping to be sisters-in-law but it didn’t work out. I am honoured and humbled by her gift to help fund future research. ”

KARYNE OPDAM,
Melanoma March participant



To leave a gift to Melanoma Institute Australia please call Gabriella Lang on **02 9911 7239** for a confidential discussion or email gabriella.lang@melanoma.org.au

PhD student publishes pioneering research

PhD student Tuba Nur Gide is wrapping up her studies with MIA, but not before publishing some significant research that will help clinicians to select the treatments with the best possible outcome for their patients.

Her research looked at signatures of response and resistance in patients receiving immunotherapy. Ms Gide and her collaborators within MIA's Translational Research Group and beyond were interested in the genes expressed in patients' melanoma both prior to treatment, and early during treatment.

Using samples from MIA patients, they found that genes involving immune memory and activation were higher in responders to immunotherapy, whereas non-responders showed higher levels of genes related to tumour adaptation and survival.

Ms Gide and the research team importantly found a specific type of immune cell that can act as a predictor of response to the immunotherapies that are currently available to patients with advanced melanoma.

The genes expressed in the melanoma of this population were also associated with longer progression-free survival and greater levels of tumour shrinkage.

The research also identified possible drug targets in the group of patients that didn't respond to immunotherapy that require further investigation.

Ms Gide presented her research as a plenary lecture late last year at the Society for Melanoma Research Congress in Manchester, England.

This study is one of the first to investigate resistance and response in the combination therapy cohort. The pioneering research has now been published in the prestigious academic journal *Cancer Cell* with Ms Gide as the first author.



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Investing in the future of science

MIA is proud to have introduced a Postgraduate Research Scholarship program to encourage training and development of MIA-affiliated postgraduate students with outstanding research potential. The six students chosen this year cover a variety of research streams.

Dr John Park (pictured) is exploring survival pathways and markers of response and resistance in uveal melanoma, a rare subtype that occurs in the eye and has a life expectancy of less than eight months after diagnosis.

Ms Amelia Smit is working to include genomics-based melanoma risk information into best practice healthcare. Her goal is for healthcare professionals to be able to assess an individual's specific melanoma risk and to personalise recommendations for sun-protection and skin-examinations.

Dr Kazi Nahar is researching immune-related adverse events in melanoma patients going through immunotherapy treatment. She is looking at colitis, an inflammation of the bowel.

Ms Gaya Punnia-Moorthy is searching for new melanoma treatments for patients who are resistant to current therapies. She is studying a specific epigenetic marker in melanoma and is testing an inhibitor of this marker as a potential therapy.

Mr Jarem Edwards is looking at new immunotherapy targets and the efficacy of these targets in melanoma patients who don't respond to standard immunotherapies.

Ms Ann Livingstone is surveying melanoma patients, their carers, and doctors, to find out their most preferred treatment strategy. She is finding out which treatment characteristics are most important in decision making about immunotherapy to inform melanoma health policy.

Vale – Helen Roche

(1969 – 2019)

Helen commenced at MIA in 2016 as Community Fundraising Manager, responsible for caring for and supporting the many families and friends within our community who volunteer their time to organise fundraising and awareness events across Australia.

Helen was very experienced and was widely regarded in the industry for her dedication and commitment to this emotionally charged but rewarding role. Helen understood the melanoma community well and continued her passion even through the difficult personal battles she was having with her illness.

Our community loved and praised Helen's ability to balance professionalism with empathy. To quote "Helen just got us, she was a delight to work with." Helen is survived by her husband, their two young adult daughters, mother, father and siblings and will be sorely missed by us all.



The impact of your donations

Thank you for your generous response to our Christmas Appeal — donations are over \$92,000. What a wonderful legacy in Adam Budulica's memory.

Thank you to Dannielle McKenzie who so generously shared Adam's story and thanks to those of you who sent a kind gift.

Many of our supporters also sent messages for our "Thank You Tree" to thank our healthcare professionals as they work tirelessly toward zero deaths from melanoma (Assoc. Professor Robyn Saw pictured above).

Your donations and messages were greatly appreciated. Your generous donations will help fund life-saving research so that — one day very soon — no-one will die from melanoma.

Upcoming events

Melanoma March

3 March – 31 March, 2019

Take steps to end melanoma, join one of 23 family-friendly Melanoma March events around the country. Check the details for your local March and register at melanomamarch.org.au

The Sydney Morning Herald Half Marathon

19 May 2019

The iconic half-marathon course takes participants past the beautiful sights of Sydney Harbour. You can register as an individual or in a relay team at melanoma.org.au.

HBF Run for a Reason

19 May 2019

Run or walk 4km, 12km or 21km in Perth. Email fundraise@melanoma.org.au to find out more.

Gold Coast Marathon

6-7 July 2019

A world-class flat, fast and scenic road running event. Register now at the events section on melanoma.org.au

Run Melbourne

28 July 2019

Choose from 5km, 10km or half-marathon events, and run for a cure! Register at the events section on melanoma.org.au

The Sun Herald City2Surf

12 August 2019

Run or walk for Team Melanoma in Sydney's largest fun run! Visit the events section on melanoma.org.au to register.

