

## Key to unlocking mucosal melanoma

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Co-Medical Director  
Professor Richard Scolyer

A drug traditionally used to treat breast cancer may hold the key to treating mucosal melanoma.

Occurring on the inner surfaces of the body and not linked to UV exposure, mucosal melanoma has a very poor prognosis with less than 20% of patients surviving five years after diagnosis.

An international study, led by researchers from Melanoma Institute Australia, QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute and The University of Sydney as part of the Australian Melanoma Genome Project, has uncovered the diverse genetic drivers for mucosal melanoma as well as identified potential treatments.

“The study revealed that a currently available class of drug commonly used to treat breast cancer is among those which look promising for treating

mucosal melanoma,” said lead study author Professor Richard Scolyer, Co-Medical Director Melanoma Institute Australia, The University of Sydney and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

“The ramifications of this study are immense and are critical in us reaching our goal of zero deaths from melanoma.”

Barbara Holland (pictured right) was diagnosed with mucosal melanoma in August 2015 after suffering headaches. “I’m one of the lucky ones,” said Barbara, who responded to treatment. “This news is so exciting for other mucosal patients and their families. It’s amazing to know that there could soon be new treatments for this horrible disease.”



While rare in Western populations like in Australia, where it makes up less than 2% of all melanoma cases, mucosal melanoma makes up a third of all melanoma cases worldwide.

The next exciting step is for Melanoma Institute Australia to develop a clinical trial to test classes of drugs and their effectiveness for treating mucosal melanoma.



To support MIA's life saving research please donate now at [melanoma.org.au](http://melanoma.org.au)



## Welcome to our Spring edition of *Momentum*.

With Spring comes longer and warmer days, and higher UV levels. And that means we all need to be extra vigilant when it comes to sun safety. So make sure your broad-brimmed hat and sunscreen are always on hand, and opt for enjoying our great outdoors in the early mornings or late afternoons.

As you will read in this edition of *Momentum*, our research advances continue, specifically in tackling mucosal melanoma which has a poorer prognosis than skin melanoma. MIA is also proud to be leading the way in detecting melanoma early in high risk patients, as well as fostering the work of up and coming research Fellows. These advances in treatment, early detection and research keep us moving forward in our quest for zero deaths from melanoma.

This vital work is underpinned by our valuable and greatly appreciated donors and supporters. I would like to personally thank every single person who so generously donated to our Tax Appeal in Andrea Bond's memory, and also those who responded to our Supporter Survey. Your insights are invaluable in helping us stay connected and relevant, and I am proud to share some of these insights with you in this edition.

Don't forget to attend the Sydney Melanoma Information Forum at The Poche Centre on 6th November, in partnership with Melanoma Patients Australia. All are warmly invited.

Finally, congratulations to our Co-Medical Directors Professors Richard Scolyer and Georgina Long, and MIA pathologist Dr Rob Rawson, who as I write this, are all representing Australia at the world triathlon championships in Switzerland. They are already world leaders in melanoma research, and I look forward to sharing with you their world placings on the triathlon stage!

**Matthew Browne**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Melanoma Institute Australia

## Research update >



### Critical Collaboration

We are proud of the multidisciplinary teams working at, and with, Melanoma Institute Australia to bring us ever closer to achieving our goal of zero deaths from melanoma. This is not an individual pursuit, but one which relies on team work and close collaboration. Sharing knowledge and expertise is critical as the world works towards saving lives from melanoma.

With that in mind, we were delighted to welcome more than 80 nurses to our 2019 Nurse Conference held at The Poche Centre. The conference gave nurses who care for patients with melanoma a better understanding of the patient experience and practical insights based on the latest research in melanoma diagnosis and treatment.

Looking forward, we are excited to see the Australasian Melanoma Conference return to Sydney in 2020. Hosted by Melanoma Institute Australia with the theme 'Promising Futures', it will bring together clinicians, researchers and other health professionals from around Australia and beyond to exchange ideas, learn about the latest data and build collaborations that are vital to push the field forward expeditiously.

At Melanoma Institute Australia, we are proud of the work conducted by our up and coming research stars and emerging leaders in the melanoma field. We would like to congratulate those who were awarded prestigious MIA PhD Scholarships and MIA Travel Grants to conduct their research and present their findings at major scientific meetings around the globe.

Finally, we would like to extend our congratulations to Associate Professor Alex Menzies for receiving the Sydney Research Young Researcher Award, and Dr Robert Rawson for receiving the Sydney Research Clinical Researcher Scholarship that were presented at the Sydney Innovation and Research symposium hosted by Sydney Local Health District during Innovation Week.

With such depth of talent and dedication, we are leading the way both nationally and internationally, and will not stop until we achieve our mission of zero deaths from melanoma.

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

# Spotlight on our Research Retreat

Each year Melanoma Institute Australia hosts a Research Retreat where our staff, faculty, students, affiliates and collaborators come together at The Poche Centre to network and share their research, projects and ideas.

The day was opened by our Co-Medical Directors, Professor Georgina Long and Professor Richard Scolyer, who updated the Reg Richardson Auditorium on the scope of everything MIA has been up to over the past twelve months. There were highlights from the fundraising and communications teams, including recent media reach and the incredible totals from both Jay's Longest Melanoma March and Melanoma March 2019, and an overview of the fantastic work of the education team.

MIA segments research into five themes that correlate with the melanoma patient journey. The five themes – early curable melanoma; advanced melanoma; prevention, risk and detection of melanoma; supportive care and survivorship; and society policy and economics – are lead by members of the MIA faculty that specialise in these areas. Increasingly, much of our research straddles many themes, and this year *70 presentations* spanning and bridging all five themes were packed into the one-day program.

The theme leaders introduced their theme by highlighting research successes, important papers, study

and trial call-outs and funding or grant opportunities. Speakers then had three minutes to present the outcomes of their research, project plans, study updates, retrospective analyses, and overviews on international collaborative efforts.

Our showcase dedicated entirely to our Fellows and PhD students was a highlight. It was exciting to see the bright future of melanoma research across every discipline – surgical and medical oncology, basic science research, health economics, policy investigation, and pathology.

The Research Retreat is not only a chance to update our colleagues on where we are at in the field of melanoma research right now, but it is also a place to discuss opportunities to collaborate, provide feedback on current or planned projects, reach out for help and guidance, discuss where and how MIA must move to remain at the forefront of melanoma research, and strategise for the future.

The goal of the Research Retreat is to foster the culture of multidisciplinary collaboration we pride ourselves on here at MIA. We believe the best way forward is to continually prioritise



*“We believe the best way forward is to continually prioritise research that can be translated into practice, change patient management, and alter policy. We come together to ensure that we are making every possible effort to reach our goal of zero deaths from melanoma.”*

research that can be translated into practice, change patient management, and alter policy. We use the day to come together to ensure that we are making every possible effort in every possible avenue to reach our goal of zero deaths from melanoma.

## NHMRC Grant Success

We would like to extend our congratulations to all of the researchers who were successful in securing NHMRC grant funding from the new Investigator Grant scheme.

We are especially excited to announce that three researchers associated with MIA were awarded Emerging Leadership funding – Dr James Wilmott, Dr Katy Bell, and Dr Lei Jen!



# Did you know?



**Karine Tobin** – melanoma survivor and author of *'We Only Live Once – Memoir of a Survivor'*

Intense, intermittent UV exposure leading to sunburn – particularly in the years prior to puberty – increases your risk of developing melanoma later in life. Although genetics also play a key role, increased levels of sun exposure are associated with an increased risk of melanoma.

Here are some ways to protect yourself from over-exposure to harmful UV rays.



Avoid exposure to direct sunlight during the middle of the day (11am - 3pm), when UV rays are most intense.



Cover yourself when out in the sun by wearing long sleeves and long pants.



Wear a wide-brimmed hat to protect the most vulnerable areas of your skin like your nose, cheeks, ears and scalp.



Wear wrap-around sunglasses.



Apply SPF 50+ sunscreen and re-apply every two hours and after swimming or exercise.

# Don't ditch the SPF

There is indisputable scientific evidence that sunscreen helps protect against UV damage, the greatest risk factor for developing melanoma. Typically, we only use 25-50% of the amount of sunscreen we need to be protected, often missing entire areas of our bodies. When too little sunscreen is applied, it reduces the sun protection factor significantly, e.g. SPF30+ may only work as SPF10.

Not sure how much sunscreen to use? Apply one teaspoon for each arm, each leg, another for your front, and one for your back. Apply half a teaspoon each to your face and your neck.

## THE 7 TEASPOON RULE



**1 TEASPOON**  
TO EACH ARM,  
EACH LEG,  
FRONT & BACK  
OF BODY



**1/2 TEASPOON**  
EACH TO FACE  
AND NECK

\*Schneider J. The teaspoon rule of applying sunscreen. Arch Dermatol. 2002; 138: 838-839.



## Patient Information Session

We are delighted to partner with Melanoma Patients Australia in hosting the Sydney Melanoma Information Forum at The Poche Centre on 6th November. Melanoma experts will provide updates and advice. Also in attendance will be Stage IV melanoma survivor Karine Tobin, who has just launched her book *'We Only Live Once – Memoir of a Survivor'*. Register now at [melanoma.org.au](http://melanoma.org.au)

## Free patient packs

MIA's melanoma patient information packs have been updated to reflect our latest understanding of melanoma. They are designed to help you understand your melanoma diagnosis, treatment and follow-up care. Three packs are available to order on our website:

Early Stage (0-II) melanoma

Stage III melanoma

Stage IV melanoma



# A day in the life of PhD Student Hansol Lee

Hansol Lee has been funded for 3 years by APEX Foundation

PhD Student Hansol Lee began a Masters Degree with MIA in June 2016. Hansol wanted to get involved in research focusing on patient therapy as his goal is to eventually become a doctor.

"I was immediately inspired by Professor Scolyer and Professor Long's research portfolio on The University of Sydney website and loved what they were doing! I immediately felt their passion for their work and the project they were offering was exactly what I was looking for."

Hansol converted his Masters into a PhD in October 2016.

He is currently looking at how a certain type of immune cell influences the way the body responds to immunotherapy in melanoma patients.

Hansol presented some of his research at the Society for Melanoma Research

Congress in Manchester last year, and the same results were published in the journal *Oncotmunology*, with Hansol as first author.

He is hoping to finish his research by March next year. "I find it interesting that the eradication of cancer involves such an intricate interplay between so many cells. Since there isn't much research on this particular topic, I wanted to explore this and get data into the scientific field."

"It will be a lot of hard work to get there but I think I will be able to make it, especially with the support of everyone in our research group."

I have loved the opportunities that the MIA research group has afforded me, especially in terms of attending world class conferences and publishing papers."



“It will be a lot of hard work to get there but I think I will be able to make it, especially with the support of everyone in our research group.”

HANSOL LEE,  
PhD Student



“Andrea and I treated every day as a blessing. And it was absolutely the treatment that gave us that extra time. Andrea didn't beat cancer but I have no doubt that at some stage in Professor Georgina Long's career, a cure will be found; it's just a matter of time.”

SCOTT BOND.

## The impact of your donations

The response to our end of financial year appeal was overwhelming, with \$320,000 raised. What a wonderful legacy in Andrea Bond's memory. Thank you particularly to Scott Bond and his family who so generously shared their story to raise funds for research.

Those of you who donated to this appeal are helping to fund research into all forms of melanoma, including those that appear on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet (acral) and internal surfaces (mucosal), so we can find more effective treatments.

Your donations are accelerating our search for a cure for all melanoma patients, bringing us closer to achieving our mission of zero deaths from melanoma. On behalf of Professors Georgina Long and Richard Scolyer, Co-Medical Directors of Melanoma Institute Australia, thank you for supporting this important appeal.



# Kerry is proud to be a Melanoma Life Saver

Kerry Wonka was 58 when his wife noticed a suspicious looking mole on his shoulder blade while they were at the beach. She urged him to get it checked.

The mole was identified as melanoma. Kerry was shocked when he learnt melanoma is the most deadly form of skin cancer, and there was a possibility it may have spread to his lymph nodes.

Former MIA surgeon, the late Dr Michael Quinn, removed the mole and performed a sentinel lymph node biopsy as part of the practice-changing MSLT-I trial. Kerry's results came back clear – the melanoma hadn't spread to his lymph nodes.

Kerry became a Melanoma Life Saver, making a regular monthly donation to fund life-saving research.

"We are fortunate in being able to give regularly so others may share the extended time on earth I've enjoyed," said Kerry.

More than 20 years later, now 79, Kerry is no longer afraid of recurrence. He has annual skin checks and appointments at MIA.

MIA encourages you to know the skin you're in, and to react quickly if you notice any changes.

A change in a skin lesion is often the strongest warning sign of melanoma. Just as Kerry's wife spotted his evolving mole, family members are often well-placed to notice changes in your skin.

MIA encourages you to know the skin you're in, and to react quickly if you notice any changes. A change in a skin lesion is often the strongest warning sign of melanoma. Just as Kerry's wife spotted his evolving mole, family members are often well-placed to notice changes in your skin.

To become a Melanoma Life Saver, please select a 'per month' option on your donation form. Thank you!



## Thank you for having your say in our Supporter Survey

### WE LEARNT THAT...

22%

of respondents first supported MIA because they had seen first-hand the suffering melanoma can cause and wanted to protect their family and friends from melanoma.

24%

monitor their skin and moles for early signs of melanoma including asymmetry, irregular borders, variation in colour, moles of 6mm or larger and moles that are evolving.

28%

reported having had a skin check as a result of information they had received from Melanoma Institute Australia.

58%

wanted to know more about the latest breakthroughs in melanoma research.

65%

were most interested in learning about early detection of melanoma.

25%

want researchers to find a cure for melanoma.

157

people affected by melanoma were willing to share their story to help raise awareness and funds.

163

people have indicated they are considering including Melanoma Institute Australia in their Will.



## Mum & daughter take on City2Surf

After Briony Stevenson, 42, had a melanoma removed from her leg, it was an anxious wait to get on a clinical trial. "It was really tough for the whole family," she recalls. "It made me determined to fundraise to help other patients also access life saving treatment."

Having run in previous events, the 2019 City2Surf was an obvious fundraising choice for Briony. Joined by her 11 year old daughter Zoe (pictured), they began training, updating their fundraising page with their progress.

Their results have been amazing, raising \$13,500 for Melanoma Institute Australia.

**If you or your workplace are interested in fundraising for MIA please contact (02) 9911 7326 or email [fundraise@melanoma.org.au](mailto:fundraise@melanoma.org.au)**



## Become a Melanoma Life Saver

By making a regular monthly donation, you will help fund innovative research, treatment and education programs bringing us closer to our goal of zero deaths from melanoma.

To become a Melanoma Life Saver, please select a **'per month'** option on your donation form. Thank you!

# Community events

## Melanoma March 2020

### Take steps to beat this killer disease!

Our biggest annual fundraiser returns in 2020. With over 22 locations nationally, find your nearest March and register your interest now at [melanomamarch.org.au](http://melanomamarch.org.au)

Can't find a March in your local area? Want to organise a March at work? Contact [events@melanoma.org.au](mailto:events@melanoma.org.au) to learn how you can host your own!



**Annabel Egan**  
Event Manager  
Melanoma Institute Australia  
T + 61 2 9911 7325  
[events@melanoma.org.au](mailto:events@melanoma.org.au)

## Upcoming events

Ever considered hosting your own fundraiser? Challenge yourself, build your confidence and make a difference to those affected by melanoma! Contact [fundraise@melanoma.org.au](mailto:fundraise@melanoma.org.au)

### Blackmores Sydney Running Festival

Sunday 15th September.

Fundraise for MIA while taking in Sydney's iconic landmarks. This is your opportunity to run over the Sydney Harbour Bridge, traffic free! Contact [fundraise@melanoma.org.au](mailto:fundraise@melanoma.org.au) to participate.

### Peter Watson Memorial Golf Day

Friday 1st November at Lynwood Country Club. Contact Phil at [philip.cassidy@advancedbuildings.com.au](mailto:philip.cassidy@advancedbuildings.com.au)

### Black Ribbon Luncheon

Friday 22nd November at Four Seasons Restaurant. Contact Lisa at [l.hanlon@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:l.hanlon@westernsydney.edu.au)



**David Holmes**  
Corporate & Community Partnerships Manager  
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# Sarah's scar reminds her to cover up!

Growing up in England, Sarah Pullen knew little about melanoma until she moved to Sydney in 2009.

She was pregnant with her second child when she noticed a tiny brown mark on her calf that was growing unusually. Ten months later, Sarah had a biopsy and was referred to Melanoma Institute Australia. She had surgery within a month.

"Thirty staples and countless stitches later, I was off my leg for about six weeks," said Sarah. "But that was all the treatment I needed. Luckily, we caught the melanoma early and it hadn't spread. I now have six-monthly check ups, and a large impressive scar!"

That scar is a constant reminder to Sarah, her two young children

and her husband to cover up and wear sunscreen. They are an active and sporty family and enjoy being outdoors, but are always sun-safe.

Since her surgery four years ago, Sarah has developed a pragmatic way of dealing with every day issues and believes knowledge is power.

"Research is vital in trying to combat melanoma, as the more you know about something the better equipped you are to fight it," said Sarah. "Melanoma Institute Australia plays a leading part in that research. It is at the forefront of treatments that are making a significant difference to people's lives."



“Research is vital in trying to combat melanoma, as the more you know about something the better equipped you are to fight it.”

SARAH PULLEN,  
melanoma survivor

## Yes, I want to support Melanoma Institute Australia

\$25

\$50

\$100

My choice of \$  or

\$25 per month or

\$50 per month or

My choice of \$  per month.

My cheque/ money order (payable to **Melanoma Institute Australia**) is attached, or please debit my credit card (details below):

Card Type:    Supporter number (if known): \_\_\_\_\_ SPN19

Card Number:

Expiry Date:   /   CVV:

I am considering including a gift to Melanoma Institute Australia in my Will.

Name on Card:

Signature:

Street:

Phone:

Suburb:

State:  Post Code:

Email:

**Please return this form with your donation to Melanoma Institute Australia, PO Box 1479, Crows Nest NSW 1585.**

Privacy Information: Melanoma Institute Australia (ACN 123 321 148) collects your personal information in order to process your donation and to provide you information set out in our privacy policy at <https://www.melanoma.org.au/general/privacy/>. If you would like to discuss your communication preferences please phone 1300 882 353.

Melanoma Institute Australia is an endorsed DGR status 1 organisation. Gifts over \$2 are tax-deductible. CFN 20341 ABN 35 123 321 148