



MONASH
University

EASTERN HEALTH CLINICAL SCHOOL

**2023
ANNUAL REPORT**

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HEAD OF SCHOOL REPORT

It is my pleasure and privilege to provide the Annual Report for Eastern Health Clinical School (EHCS) for 2023.

EHCS is the key point of intersection between Eastern Health and Monash University, and with Deakin University in respect of medical student training. EHCS represents this strong partnership, and is able to be productive and successful through being intrinsically embedded within Eastern Health. Monash EHCS academics have Eastern Health appointments; opportunities are grown and realised in partnership; our students, whether they be pre-registration or research higher degree, are engaged in learning and research that is deeply relevant and applicable to Monash, Deakin, Eastern Health, and the broader community that we all serve.

The outcomes of this are that: students are attracted to come to EHCS and to Eastern Health; once they are here, most wish to stay and would recommend us to others; a very large proportion of Eastern Health research output is produced by EHCS; and EHCS is a nexus for other collaborations, both internal and external.

2023 was another very busy year for EHCS, mainly of consolidation and growth of existing programs, and laying the groundwork for future expansion. This has occurred as our community gradually emerged from the constraints of COVID, with its isolation, rapid and unexpected changes in processes and workforce availability, and gradual recovery of supply lines. The financial impact of the pandemic continues to be felt and will continue for some time yet. All of this has required substantial re-evaluation and re-imagining of all that we do, together with careful planning for use of financial and other resources.

All of those challenges make it all the more gratifying that EHCS has once again surpassed itself. Eastern Health in 2023 instituted a new strategic plan and executive structure, with resultant impact on governance and reporting lines relevant to the School. We were able to respond to this rapidly and effectively, supporting and enhancing the process and transformation with the establishment of the Eastern Health Institute under which much of EHCS activity now sits. This occurred in conjunction with a number of other longer term initiatives requiring clear communication and understanding between Monash University and Eastern Health, including planning for a refresh and update of the underlying collaborative agreement; development of medium and long term plans for growth and access to space and other relevant resources; input into the future Maroondah Hospital redevelopment; and ongoing improvement in our models for both education and research.

This has resulted in record metrics for revenue, as you will see later in this report, together with multiple awards, and growth in profile for the universities and the health service. A selection of highlights for 2023 is provided at the end of this introduction.



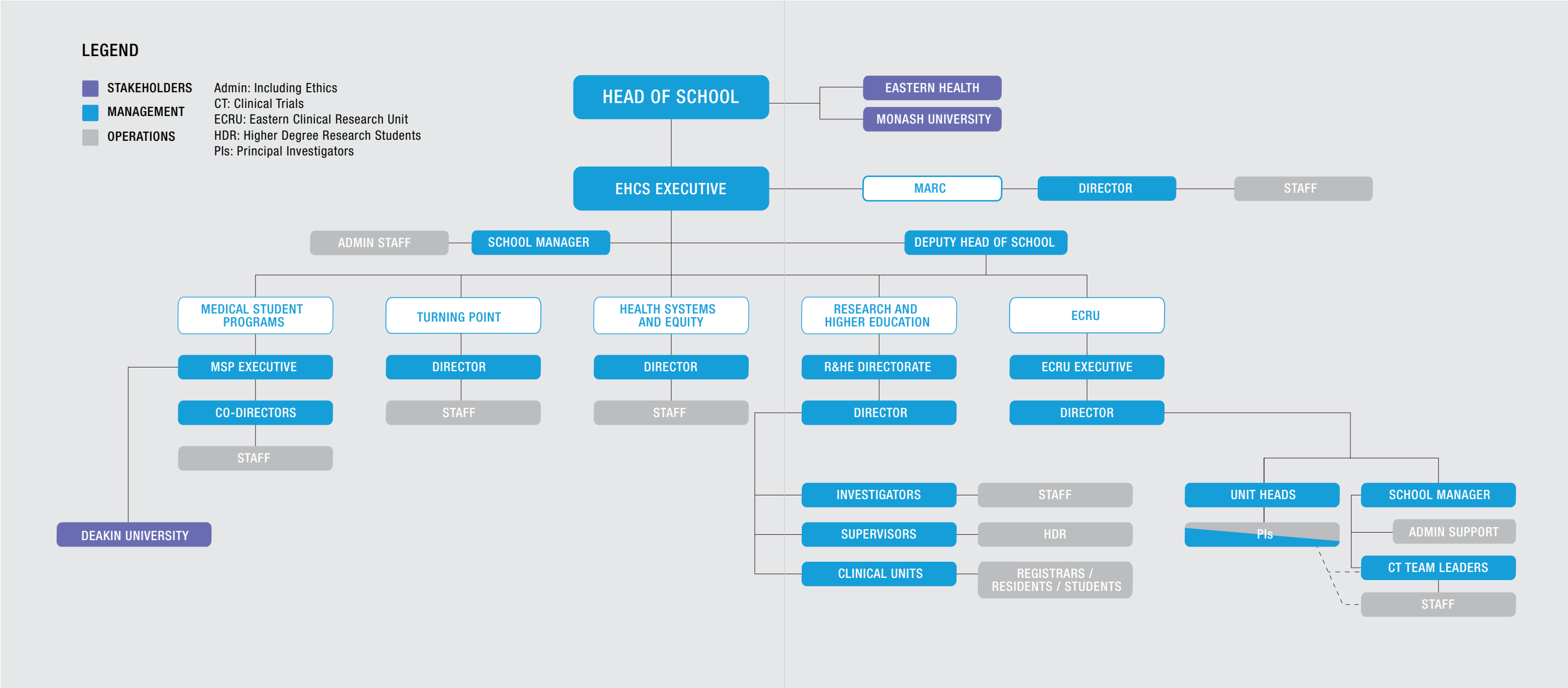
EASTERN HEALTH CLINICAL SCHOOL: GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT

Overall strategy for EHCS is led by the School Executive: Head of School, School Manager, directors of each directorate, the Professor of Surgery, and two other Monash academics. The EHCS Executive formally meets five times per year and informally as needed. EHCS minutes are tabled at the Faculty Executive of Monash University's Faculty of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences. Reporting to Eastern Health takes place through the Eastern Health Institute structure, which oversees research and education at all levels within Eastern Health. Medical Student Programs reports to both universities and to Eastern Health through the EHCS MSP Executive. Other stakeholders include our staff and students, collaborators, funders, government, and the broader community, with communication for each through various processes as needed. EHCS provides central administrative support to staff and students for finance, research governance, ethics, human resources, and central university resources; reporting on all of these aspects occurs through the relevant governance processes.

EHCS comprises five in-house directorates, and one off-site Centre, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Actual full-time equivalent (FTE) staff in 2023 were: 5.74 FTE academic staff; 23.48 FTE research academic staff; 55.18 FTE research professional staff; and 17.78 FTE professional and technical staff, most of whom provide support for EHCS Medical Student Programs, the ECRU clinical research program, the laboratory group based at Box Hill, Turning Point, and MARC. Almost all staff are employed through Monash University, with some having joint appointments also with Eastern Health and/or Deakin University. The numbers in research professional staff remain stable since 2022, due to a similar volume of activities within clinical trials in 2023. However, we have seen an increase in research academic staff; this reflects the success in our research grants compared to previous years. We also have an increase in professional and technical staff, mainly in research administration.

Fig 1: Organisational Chart



The EHCS Strategic Plan 2021-2025 is illustrated in Figure 2. This was developed in the context of the then-current strategic plans for Monash, Deakin, and Eastern Health, and forms the basis of decision making and reporting for the EHCS Executive. It remains relevant to the Monash “Impact 2030” strategic plan implemented in 2021. The new Eastern Health Strategic Plan 2023-2025 is based on the promise of “Healthier together” with strategic goals of Enabled and empowered people; Excellent care and experiences; Safe and welcoming; Optimising resources. It is clear that the EHCS Strategic Plan remains well aligned with this as well, and EHCS has adjusted smoothly to the resultant executive structure reorganisation undertaken by Eastern Health.

Fig 2: EHCS Strategic Themes and Goals

Strategic Theme	1. Excellence for the community 	2. Excellence for the health service 	3. Excellence for the university 	4. Excellence for our people 
Strategic Goals	1.1 Best quality clinical outcomes	2.1 Highest quality care	3.1 Outstanding student outcomes	4.1 Promoting staff and student wellbeing
	1.2 Best quality clinical trials	2.2 Leading an integrated, community-focussed research agenda	3.2 High quality research outcomes	4.2 Provision of support systems
	1.3 Understanding and meeting needs	2.3 Adding value to education and vocational training	3.3 Community of clinical educators	4.3 Opportunities for professional growth
	1.4 Bringing networks together	2.4 Leveraging value from health data	3.4 Leadership in university functions	

EXCELLENCE FOR THE COMMUNITY

- 1.1 Best quality clinical outcomes: most senior clinical leaders at Eastern Health have either formal or adjunct Monash University appointments. The academic rigour and drive to evidence-based practice promoted by the university is directly relevant to promotion of clinical excellence and resultant outcomes for the community we serve.

1.2 Best quality clinical trials: EHCS Eastern Clinical Research Unit (ECRU) has won awards for the quality of the clinical trials we undertake on behalf of Eastern Health. This work also supports investigator-initiated trials based on recognition of clinical need and gaps in evidence. ECRU functions under a Memorandum of Agreement between Eastern Health and Monash University, where ECRU provides the necessary “machinery” for the conduct of most clinical trials undertaken at Eastern Health.

1.3 Understanding and meeting needs: this is a central tenet for how both Eastern Health and EHCS prioritise research activities and provision of education. We are here to serve our various communities, including our patients, students, staff, adjuncts and affiliates, other organisations and healthcare providers, and of course the wider community. EHCS has an extensive portfolio of activities working with the wider community to achieve these ends. Future work will increasingly involve direct involvement of community and consumer representatives.

1.4 Bringing networks together: Eastern Health has also recognised this as an area for improvement and has developed the Eastern Health Institute as part of the way it will address it. EHCS has extensive links with other academic groups and health services. Our university connections give access to platforms and systems that enhance discovery, analysis, and translation, while building new programs that are greater than the sums of their parts. EHCS continues to be a key component of the Monash Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre.

EXCELLENCE FOR THE HEALTH SERVICE

- 2.1 Highest quality care: EHCS comprises clinicians, students, and trainees from various disciplines. Our people are embedded in Eastern Health and are key providers of clinical care, clinical governance, and planning. EHCS provides educational initiatives such as Grand Rounds, workshops, seminar series, and other activities aimed at ongoing quality improvement to ensure we provide the best possible health care.

2.2 Leading an integrated, community-focussed research agenda: EHCS aims to work with its partners to meet needs where they are found. This means engagement with external stakeholders, as well as bringing together various internal groups that might not naturally have gravitated together. This allows sharing of experience and resources, and ensures that our work is continually checked for relevance by those most affected by it. Examples include Turning Point, the Monash Addiction Research Centre, the Health Systems and Equity directorate; and specific projects such as the TROPHI primary care collaboration.

2.3 Adding value to education and vocational training: EHCS promotes a culture of learning and continuous improvement. Part of this is to ensure smooth continuity and transition for medical students as they enter their professional employment as interns. EHCS works closely with Eastern Health to provide practical support for simulation activities, training, short courses, additional formal qualifications, and building a culture of longitudinal ongoing education together with interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary learning.

2.4 Leveraging value from health data: EHCS works closely with Eastern Health and with university departments to maximise learnings from the vast quantity of clinical data collected continuously as part of patient care, as well as through formal research projects. An example is the ongoing and highly successful ADEPT-EH project, which uses the electronic medical record to develop dashboards for real-time monitoring and reporting of key outcomes relevant to accreditation.
- 3.1 Outstanding student outcomes: EHCS aims to provide the best experience possible for its students, to ensure they are fit for their professional practice, but also that their wellbeing is optimised. Our Medical Student Programs surveys consistently return findings of academic excellence for our student cohort, and very high metrics for student satisfaction and wellbeing. MSP processes can serve as a model for how best to support ongoing education and support for staff.

3.2 High quality research outcomes: Research is key to recognising and addressing gaps in evidence and areas for improvement in health care practice and policy. Metrics for research quality include student completions, numbers of publications, presentations of research findings, journal metrics, citations, incorporation into practice and policy, and national and international collaborations and authorships.

3.3 Community of clinical educators: EHCS has worked to build and support a dedicated team of educators and clinical teachers, including adjuncts and affiliates. This group is supported by materials and training through EHCS, and the benefits are immediately manifested in the clinical setting. EHCS also provides pastoral care and oversight for its students and staff.

3.4 Leadership in university functions: EHCS staff participate in various committees and other functions within Monash and Deakin Universities, to highlight the needs and contributions of our students, staff, adjuncts, and other stakeholders, while ensuring that Eastern Health is represented on various decision-making bodies. This in turn will ensure that we have access to the best and most current educational delivery and assessment processes, as well as supporting the high quality research we produce. Our engagement includes participation in administration, networks, partnerships, governance, curriculum development / delivery / assessment, and expanding research collaborations.

EXCELLENCE FOR OUR PEOPLE

4.1 Promoting staff and student wellbeing: EHCS is proud to be one of the leading Schools in terms of wellbeing metrics for both staff and students. This has come about not by accident, but by careful consideration and planning to ensure that these issues are considered to be important and not overlooked.

4.2 Provision of support systems: EHCS provides support internally for its educators and researchers, but also provides substantial external support. This includes financial management, equipment procurement and maintenance, IT, ethics processes, library services, access to statistical support, and support for quarantined research and teaching time for staff.

4.3 Opportunities for professional growth: EHCS supervisors work closely with their staff to identify opportunities for training or other expertise, to further future career development as well as enhancing current activity. These are investments for the future. EHCS also provides mentorship for junior staff and students.

SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2023

Throughout this Annual Report you will find information from various groups within or linked to EHCS, describing their achievements over 2023. We are grateful and thankful for the cast of hundreds who contributed to yet another great year for the School. Some selected highlights from throughout 2023 are as follows:

- Appointment of co-directors of Medical Student Programs. A/Prof Deb Leach has provided outstanding leadership as director of MSP for several years, and expressed a wish to take on additional Faculty responsibilities in 2023. We were delighted to appoint A/Prof Caroline Dowling into the role of MSP co-director with Deb, increasing the total FTE to 1.0, giving much-needed leave cover and other flexibility, and bringing Caroline's expertise and strengths to the School. This new model has worked extremely well.
- Biostatistician appointment. EHCS was delighted to welcome in 2023 a full time statistician, Emily Schembri. Emily's skills have been in strong demand ever since, and EHCS is pleased to offer this statistical support to anyone in Eastern Health who needs it.
- Diversity and inclusion. We recognise our areas of diversity and also areas where we do not have enough diversity. Our D&I committee has been working tirelessly to highlight these needs and provide opportunities for all to be involved.
- Clinical trials management. The CRIO system was implemented in 2023 for certain clinical trials, with a view to scaling up in coming years. CRIO substantially reduces the risk of Good Clinical Research Practice deviations and violations, and simplifies the documentation processes.
- EHCS executive planning day. The School executive held a planning day on 4 August 2023 to begin discussions about future updates of the EHCS strategic plan, sustainability, indigenous partnerships, equity, building research capability, financial stability, space, thematic research, strategies for building higher degree research student opportunities, and how best to contribute to and participate in the Eastern Health Institute and its proposed centres of excellence.
- Research grants. Multiple grant applications were submitted, with some substantial successes including an equipment grant, Eastern Health Foundation funding, finalists in the Vic Health Promotion Awards, grants from the Ian Potter Foundation and the National Centre for Healthy Ageing, NHMRC, and others.
- Symposia. The MARC Symposium was held in May with over 100 attendees, and an early career researchers' symposium was held with presentations from a wide range of ECRs and more senior researchers.
- APEx. Medical Student Programs successfully implemented the new Monash Assessment for Progression Examinations (APEx), allowing much more relevant and less stressful assessment of students.
- Medical student achievements. Four Monash Faculty Prizes were awarded to 5D EHCS students, including for the top students in aged care and in surgery, and the Christine McMenamin Professionalism award. The Humanitarian award went to Wai Chung Tse who was with us as a Year 3B student and continued at EH in a medical assistant role in ED but unfortunately was not selected as an EH intern. The two top 3B Monash students were EHCS students.
- A/Prof Shalini Arunogiri was the winner of the 2023 Victorian Young Tall Poppy Science Award.
- Dr Rowan Ogeil was appointed as the strategic lead of the National Addiction & Mental Health Surveillance Unit (NAMHSU).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

2023 has been another highly successful year for EHCS. We are conscious that many challenges still remain, and there is an ongoing need for continuous improvement. There is also a need for growth, not just for the sake of it, but to ensure that the ever-growing list of needs we identify can be properly addressed, and that opportunities can be grasped and leveraged optimally. We plan to:

- Continue the growth of our existing successful groups.
- Support smaller or newer groups as they emerge and start to build their presence.
- Bring in new researchers and groups.
- Institute new initiatives that will provide additional directions for research and opportunities for new staff and students.
- Grow our higher degree research student population by providing a wider selection of projects, and providing the support they need to take on their projects without concerns for financial liability.
- Identify and secure new and additional space for expansion.
- Improve the infrastructure and processes underpinning the support provided by EHCS to its staff and students as well as to others in Eastern Health.
- Support and continue to build the community of early and mid-career researchers.
- Optimise links with Monash Partners and share experiences and opportunities between different Monash Partners themes and platforms.
- Position EHCS and Eastern Health as leaders in a growing range of projects and collaborations.

I commend to you this EHCS Annual Report for 2023.

Ian Davis
Head, Eastern Health Clinical School
Professor of Medicine, Monash University and Eastern Health
Affiliate Professor, Deakin University
NHMRC Leadership Fellow L3



DIRECTORATE REPORTS

MEDICAL STUDENT PROGRAMS

CO-DIRECTORS: A/PROF DEB LEACH AND A/PROF CAROLINE DOWLING

2023 brought increasing relief from pandemic management conditions. Students are growing in their clinical skills acquisition in the traditional way, and we have encouraged them to be present and as “face to face” as possible. This will be a key target in 2024. Hard work has borne fruit for many students with high achievement recognised by MSP and faculty of both our university cohorts. Prizes were awarded across all years to our students.

For both groups of university graduates we have seen immense personal growth and more than 50% of the interns at Eastern Health in 2024 are from our school or one closely associated with us. We have also provided placement for many students who are coming to Eastern Health as interns from external sites to grow their familiarity and comfort with the clinical space. We are keenly working with the newly formed Eastern Health Institute to make orientation for the new interns more seamless.

For Monash, the new assessment approach or “Assessment for Progression” (APEX) emulates the clinical environment and encourages students to attain excellence in history taking, examination skills and patient centredness. Assessors have enjoyed involvement in APEX as it provides a more real-world, realistic process than the OSCE with its attendant constraints. The opportunity to provide students with feedback is particularly valued.

The main staff change has been the division of the director role into two Co-Directors. A/Prof Dowling was delighted to join the team mid-year and contribute to the many initiatives and processes that A/Prof Leach has established to benefit student learning and well-being. Initiatives such as the Near-Peer teaching program, an intern preparedness session in PRINT2 for the Deakin cohort and having the Co-Directors’ Executive Assistant act as a student well-being officer are just a few of the contributions that cede to very high satisfaction on exit surveys from our students. A/Prof Dowling has easily integrated into the MSP team and highlighted her surgical focus as important for students to see as a career direction. Her initiatives have also improved their access to theatre for learning in 2024.

Bedside coaching is the hallmark of student teaching and a model that has stood the test of time. We have migrated to a mandated tutorial program at the bedside for 2023, building on the strengths of the self-sign up system and capturing the entire Year 3 Deakin and Monash cohort. This process is underpinned by our excellent group of teachers, and we thank them for their input. They have enormous influence and opportunity to help all learners, the high achievers excelling and allowing us to support those for whom the process of clinical skills acquisition in history and examination takes longer or more focussed teaching to develop.

Our simulation program for final year students includes an inter-professional component that ensures students graduate with work-ready skills related to patient safety.

Along with our wonderful academics who work tirelessly and with great skill to bring together and manage the program we have an administrative support team that provides individual year coordination, financial management and management of the program overall. The year ended with a farewell to our Clinical Skills Educator, Ms Kerrie Davies, and we wish her well and thank her for her service. As we begin 2024, Anwen

Hughes has returned from maternity leave to her Senior Planning Officer role to support the team alongside Lucy Jackson as Senior Clinical Site Officer.

In 2024 we look forward to working with more of the clinical team from Eastern Health and our academic affiliates from the universities in teaching and assessment activities, further developing innovative and supportive teaching programs and undertaking medical education research.



TURNING POINT

DIRECTOR: PROF DAN LUBMAN AM

Turning Point is Australia's leading addiction treatment centre, dedicated to providing high-quality, evidence-based treatment for people adversely affected by alcohol, drugs and gambling.

The centre operates more than two dozen helplines, supports health professionals nationally and internationally, and draws on its clinical, research, and policy expertise to provide evidence-based advice to drive change.

In 2023, Turning Point continued to provide high-quality treatment and support for our clients, as well as world-leading research and education programs.

Significant research continued across a broad range of areas, including the unique challenges faced by the lived and living experience alcohol and other drugs workers, the relationship between public holidays and Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD)-related road incidents, the benefits of brief alcohol interventions in the breast screening setting, the benefits of peer support for helpline callers, and the ways that COVID-19 lockdowns impacted alcohol-related ambulance attendances. Over the year, Turning Point researchers had 38 journal articles and 26 technical reports published, with 53 national and 7 international conference presentations.

In June, the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs released the report *You win some, you lose more* as a result of their inquiry into online gambling and its impact on those experiencing gambling harm. Nine of the report's recommendations aligned with Turning Point's submission to the inquiry. Turning Point also continued to influence addiction policy in areas including venue-based gambling, alcohol-related harms, criminalisation and addiction-related stigma.

In April, we launched the Hamilton Centre, the new statewide specialist centre for addiction and mental health, which supports people with co-occurring problems to access holistic care and navigate a complex treatment system. The initiative is part of the implementation of the 2021 Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System's recommendations. Throughout 2023, the centre received over 400 referrals, with over 50 primary and many more secondary consultations undertaken across the centre's clinical network sites. The service is also developing and delivering tailored education and training for a wide range of diverse clinician groups and settings.

Following extensive redevelopment, Turning Point has continued to deliver the Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, and the Master of Addictive Behaviours through Monash University, with excellent student feedback. As a result of support from the Victorian Department of Health, 40 scholarships for the Graduate Certificate of Addictive Behaviours were available in 2023. Turning Point offered 20 scholarships for Victorian AOD workers as did the Victorian branch of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) for nurses and midwives. For the first time in 2023, an additional 20 scholarships were offered by the Hamilton Centre to Victorian Mental Health and Wellbeing workers, for students to commence in 2024.

On behalf of Turning Point's Executive Leadership team, I would like to thank our dedicated partners and collaborators for the support they provide. None of the work that we do would be possible without our skilled and dedicated staff who continue to go above and beyond in their work to minimise the harm, discrimination and stigma of addiction.



RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

For the first time in five years, Turning Point hosted a research symposium at Church Street in Richmond.

This year's theme was "Research for Impact".

More than 100 attendees including Monash University academics, Eastern Health clinicians, external research collaborators, government stakeholders, current and prospective funders, and philanthropists heard 16 presentations outlining the real-world outcomes and translational prospects of Turning Point's research.

Across the symposium, researchers at different career stages shared the cutting-edge, evidence-based addiction research that is shaping policy, practice and community attitudes. The program also featured a panel discussing Turning Point's unique National Ambulance Surveillance System (NASS).

AIHW RE-CONTRACTED

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has awarded Turning Point's NAMHSU team a new tender to maintain and enhance the National Ambulance Surveillance System (NASS) to include suicide, self-harm and mental health related attendances. This continues the partnership between our teams which has built on the monthly ambulance attendance data provided by Turning Point since January 2021 for New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

Turning Point is delighted to have secured funding to continue this work, which results in Turning Point's world first NASS data informing part of the national suicide and self-harm monitoring system maintained by AIHW.

For the NASS, Turning Point codes, aggregates and provides nationally relevant data on ambulance attendances for self-harm, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts, with data demographics (for example, age and gender).



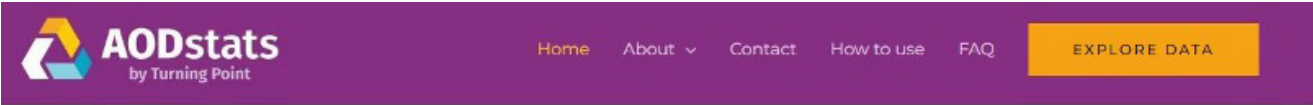
AOD STATS

The AOD stats team continues to use NASS and other Victorian data to track trends in alcohol and drug harm across the state. This information provides a convenient statistical and epidemiological resource for policy planners, drug service providers, health professionals and other key stakeholders.

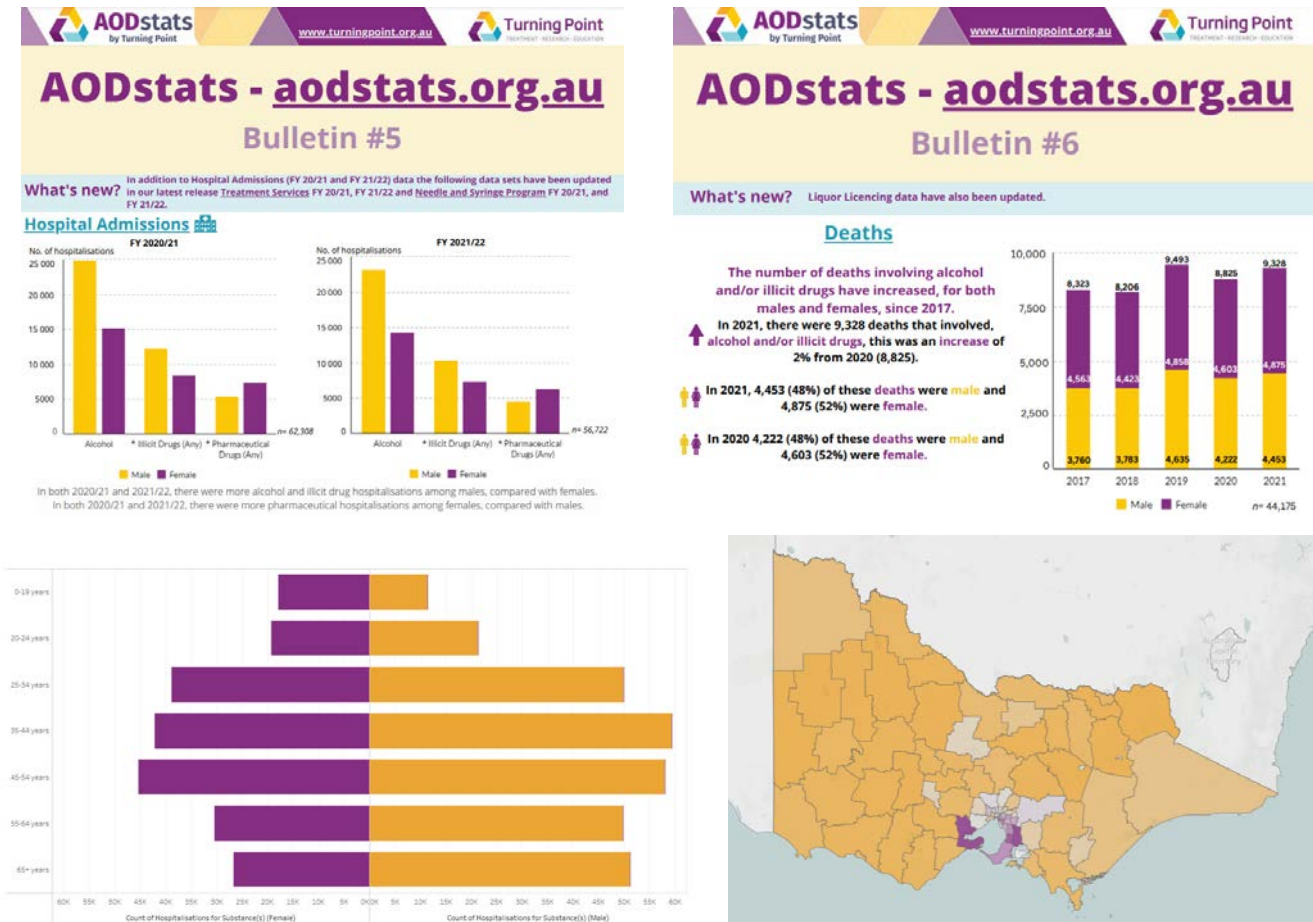
In 2023, the team released two bulletins for subscribers, with these available for download on the AODstats website. In August, researchers found that inhalant-related hospitalisations among young people aged 0-34 rose in the 2021-22 year compared with 2020-21.

In November, the data showed that deaths involving alcohol and/or illicit drugs have continued to rise since 2017 for both males and females. In 2021, there were 9328 deaths involving alcohol and/or illicit drugs; a 2% increase on the 2020 total (8825).

Eleven different datasets are provided on the website, with many including 10 years worth of data that can be downloaded to the LGA level. Providing transparent and consistent population-level data is critical in informing governments with an evidence base to make policy changes that minimise the impact and burden associated with these harms.



AODstats - Victorian alcohol and drug statistics



RESEARCH FUNDING

LLE PROJECT SUPPORTING PEER WORKFORCE

Funder: Victorian Department of Health

To inform best practice, research led by Dr Ari Roxburgh is examining the experiences of Victorian lived and living experience (LLE) workforces.

The LLE workforce draws on their experience and expertise of past or current AOD use, plus skills learned in formal training, to provide direct support and drive service and system improvement for better health and wellbeing outcomes.

In this Department of Health-funded study, Turning Point researchers will undertake a series of focus groups and qualitative interviews with LLE leads, peer workers and service managers in both treatment and harm reduction organisations to better understand their unique and shared challenges, inform best practice and identify opportunities to strengthen the workforce. The researchers aim to examine topics such as training and supervision needs and organisational readiness to inform recommendations for a thriving LLE workforce.

MODIF-I

Funder: Victorian Medical Research Acceleration Fund

In 2020, Professor Victoria Manning developed SWiPE, an app that delivers personalised cognitive bias modification which was shown to help people reduce their drinking.

In 2023 Prof Manning was awarded funding to develop a similar tool to help Australians quit smoking, called Modif-i.

Although 40 percent of smokers try to quit each year, only around 5 percent are successful, making tobacco one of the toughest substances to give up.

Through a collaboration with behavioural scientists at Cancer Council Victoria, Deakin and Flinders University, Professor Manning and her team at Turning Point will recruit 200 Victorians who want to quit smoking to participate in a pilot randomised controlled trial (RCT) comparing Modif-i to a control version.

The app will be co-designed with counsellors at Quitline and people with lived experience of quitting smoking. The effectiveness of the app (i.e. quit rates and cigarette consumption) will be assessed at the end of the 4-week intervention period, and again at 1-month and 3-month follow-ups.

The team hopes Modif-i will provide a low cost, scalable and convenient tool to help people wanting to quit smoking.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Master of Addictive Behaviours program enables the development of specialist knowledge and professional skills to support individuals and communities impacted by addiction.

The course also offers a Graduate Certificate (12 months) and a Graduate Diploma (2 years), with 93 enrolments across all three programs throughout the year. In 2023, there were 54 course completions.

“I have also really appreciated the time and energy that you and your team have put into developing a Graduate Certificate that is highly relevant to my day-to-day clinical work practice. I couldn’t have hoped for a more well-rounded learning experience.”

Student of the Graduate Certificate of Addictive Behaviours, 2023

“I have so enjoyed my year of study. It has really enhanced my work as an AOD community health nurse and improved my skills for my clients. The course design has been brilliant and I really appreciate the flexibility that has allowed me to fit in study around work and family life.”

Student of the Graduate Certificate of Addictive Behaviours, 2023



RESEARCH AND HIGHER EDUCATION

DIRECTOR: PROF IAN DAVIS

The Research and Higher Education Directorate oversees a broad range of research, such as clinical research (not including clinical trials), basic research, and translational research. The Directorate meets four times per year and has an inclusive membership. It aims to bring together researchers to raise awareness of the types of research being done or proposed; to build collaborations, share resources and solutions; enhance capability, including that of supervisors; link disparate groups; and provide support for the design, analysis, and reporting of research. The directorate also oversees laboratory functions within EHCS and ensures that the necessary facilities and support are available to whomever needs them.

A forum such as this is very necessary in a diverse and dispersed health service, where individual researchers might be widely separated, or potential researchers inhibited by uncertainty as to how to go about generating and answering research questions. EHCS provides the expertise for such people to undertake research with confidence and integrity. This is clearly highly relevant to the ability of Eastern Health and Monash University to meet their stated research objectives.

The Research and Higher Education directorate also mediates communication about grant and other funding opportunities; Monash Partners activities; updating the Eastern Health community on university activities relevant to research at Eastern Health; oversight of higher degree research students; oversight of grant financial management; support for early and mid-career researchers; and updates on platforms, technologies, and services available through EHCS or Monash.

The impact of EHCS research continues to be substantial. The number of publications continues to grow, and other measures of quality and impact such as field-weighted citation impact, publications in the top 10% of citations, publications in top journals, and international collaborations, are also increasing. Data obtained from SciVal as at May 2024 are shown below, noting that citation data for 2023 are still incomplete. The proportion of papers representing academic/corporate collaboration over the period 2018-2023 was 5.0%, while the proportion of papers representing international collaboration was 40.9% for the same period.

	Overall	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Scholarly Output	2932	418	401	455	530	463	468
Citations	48,417	11,618	10,484	12,136	8655	3849	1564*
Field-Weighted Citation Impact	1.99	1.72	1.85	1.93	1.92	2.08	2.26
% outputs in Top Citation Percentiles (top 10%, field-weighted)	17.0	16.7	13.7	19.3	17.0	16.2	16.2
% publications in Top Journal Percentiles (top 10% by CiteScore Percentile)	39.7	40.1	36.5	42.6	39.5	38.0	38.0

* still incomplete

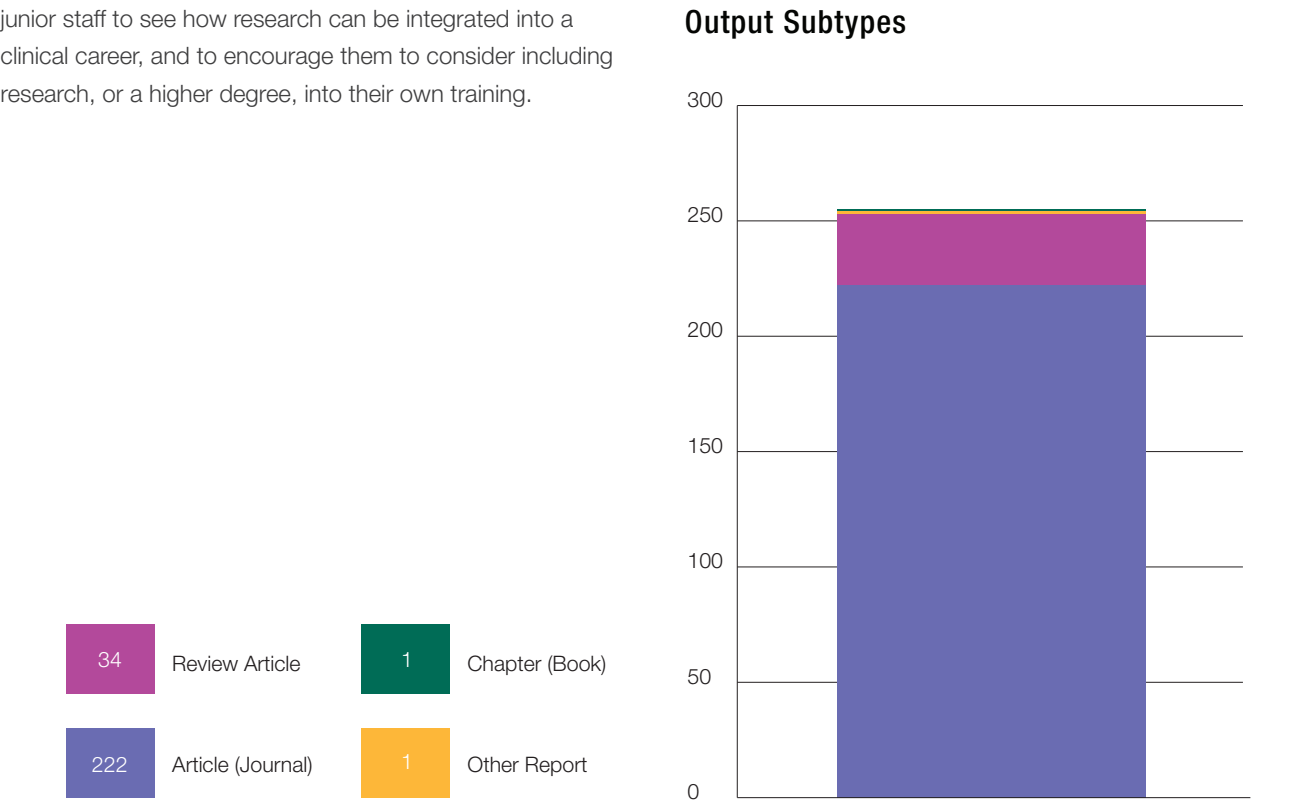
2023 was a challenging year for grants although we celebrated Investigator Grant success for Prof Suzi Nielsen (Leadership Fellow L1).

Dr Pavel Sluka served as the research higher degree coordinator, and also provided oversight of the BMedSc(Hons) program. As at late November 2023, EHCS had 20 enrolled PhD students, 6 MSurg students, 2 MPhil students, and 1 BMedSc(Hons) student. Six new research higher degree students were in the process of applying for 2024.

EHCS coordinates the weekly Department of Medicine Grand Round seminar series. This is hosted at Box Hill Hospital and during the COVID-19 pandemic moved largely to virtual-only presentations. This had the unexpected benefit of securing better audio visual equipment; and the capability of recording presentations for later asynchronous viewing by people across Eastern Health unable to attend at the time of the presentation. Most medical specialties are involved in the Grand Round program, and the content includes visiting speakers, case-based presentations, and learning opportunities particularly aimed at basic physician trainees. The Grand Round series is an opportunity for trainees and junior staff to see how research can be integrated into a clinical career, and to encourage them to consider including research, or a higher degree, into their own training.

Eastern Health and EHCS are both active participants in Monash Partners Academic Health Science Centre (MPAHSC). The MPAHSC themes of Monash Partners initiatives are Cancer and Blood Diseases; Cardiovascular Disease; Critical Care; Trauma and Perioperative Medicine; Infection and Inflammation; Metabolic Medicine; Neuroscience, Mental Health and Sleep; and Women’s and Children’s Health. EHCS Head of School is a member of the Monash Partners Executive, as well as sitting on the Cancer and Blood Diseases theme executive and other committees, including digital health and health services research. Various other Eastern Health and EHCS senior staff represent Eastern Health on other Monash Partners themes. MPAHSC platforms support clinical research, data management, data linkage systems, registries, health systems research, consumer involvement, workforce development, and implementation science. EHCS continues to encourage its staff to be involved in MPAHSC initiatives and to take on leadership roles.

Fig 3: Output Subtypes (Monash Power BI data; figures may differ from SciVal).



HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS AND PROJECTS

PhD	
Student	Project Title
Anthony Hew	Frequent mental health presenters – characteristics and opportunities for intervention
Anuj Bohra (Thesis submitted)	Enhancing quality and utility of disease assessment modalities in Crohn’s disease
Aruni Malaweera	Determining the utility of uraemic toxins in peritoneal dialysis to optimise patient care
Bronwyn Maddock	Interprofessional education programs for preregistration health care students. What works, for whom and in what circumstances and why?
Chuan Foo	Understanding mechanisms of airway and lung disease using hyperpolarised gas MRI
Daniel Ramazanov	Investigating the effects of approach bias modification on alcohol cravings
Gebresilasea Ukke	Development of a diabetes prevention program for postpartum women with high metabolic risks in ET
Georgia Bolt	Personalised CBM in older adults with hazardous alcohol use: A novel cognitive intervention
Hannah Silva	Evaluation of the long-term outcomes of the low FODMAP diet in irritable bowel syndrome
Henry Yao	Genitourinary cancer survivorship – management of adverse effects of cancer treatment and improvement of quality of life during cancer survivorship
Hui Yi Ng	Detection of circulating tumour DNA in thyroid cancer for risk stratification and prognostication
Ifeoluwa Adesina	Advancing women in healthcare leadership: Exploring the intersection of race, gender and ethnicity
Jie (Jenna) Yang	Research on exploring the best practice for management of concurrent chronic pain and opioid use disorder
Justin James	A model to select early breast cancers where sentinel node biopsy is not necessary
Lik Hui (Will) Lau	Remote glucose monitoring and an interactive glucose management system in gestational diabetes
Lily Curtis	Alcohol consumption practices during COVID-19 and beyond
Monica Jung	Utilising primary health care data to understand and optimise prescribing of drugs of dependence
Myfanwy Graham	Access to unapproved psychoactive medicines: Examining health outcomes for mental health and pain
Penelope Casey	Delirium in hospitalised adults: Nurses’ recognition and documentation practices
Ramez Bathish	Examining the philosophies, practices and experiences of AOD residential rehabilitation
Ruchira Nandurkar (PhD conferred)	Local and systemic detection and management of dislodged tumour cells to reduce post-treatment recurrence
Shananthan Balachandran	Novel combination therapies for epithelial thyroid cancer
Wubet Takele	Epidemiology of maternal malnutrition and gestational weight gain in the Amhara region, Ethiopia

Master of Surgery	
Student	Project Title
Abram Botros	Implementation of a risk stratification checklist and patient-specific care plans for bladder cancer
Antara Karmakar	Are you there?: Longitudinal detection of tumour-derived DNA in blood and urine during management of bladder cancer
Chris Ip	Selection of men suitable to postpone prostate biopsy with negative prostate magnetic resonance imaging
Ghadir Omran (MSurg conferred)	Genital protectors in sport: Are they fit for purpose?
Janindu Goonawardena	Predicting patients who would benefit from oesophagectomy following neoadjuvant chemoradiotherapy
Joshua Kealey (MSurg conferred)	Upper tract urothelial carcinoma registry: Guiding best clinical practice and patient care
Paul Rival	Assessing up to date guidelines on the management of recurrent UTIs: a pilot study
Ruth Snider	A contemporary tailored approach to recurrent urinary tract infections in females
Shantanu Joglekar	Reducing occupational scatter radiation dose exposure at ERCP

Master of Philosophy	
Student	Project Title
Ashling Courtney	Identifying risk factors relating to social disadvantage that influence atopic dermatitis
Helena Cangadis-Douglass	Utilising routinely collected primary health care data to understand prescribing of opioids

WINTER AND SUMMER STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

Winter Scholarship	
Student	Project Title
Xin Yi (Zoe) Lim	Real-world treatment patterns and outcomes in advanced breast cancer
Zoe Yi Zhu	Improving preconception health literacy of women from culturally and linguistically diverse background
Nathan Yuen	Audit of rheumatology patients admitted with sepsis
Eric Wang	Audit of large vessel vasculitis involving the aorta
Prarthana Sagar	Personality disorder research: Experiencing the research process in cross-section
Angelyn Neoh	Holding HOPE: Evaluation of a local hospital outreach post-suicide engagement program
Ryan Kua	Improving management of borderline personality disorder in emergency department settings
Xian De Ng	Use of double depot antipsychotic medication: A case control study
Thomas Wright-Hill	Evaluation of a lived experience-led mental health group program
Mai (Thi Ngoc) Vu	Naturalistic study of privately admitted patients who experience suicidal ideation
James Crispin	ECG equivalence in acute mental health settings
Nandini Karthikeyan	Exploring the impact of opioid policies in Victoria
Yong Le (Isaac) Lee	Caregiver workload monitoring in the ICU using artificial intelligence
Kumaran Manivannan	Carboplatin dosing methods – is newer better?
Zeynep Balikci and Ulyana Kondratova	Opioid prescribing and dispensing: Examining the impact of policy on practice
Stephanie Kim	A literature review of health-based responses and diversion models for minor drug offences

Summer Scholarship	
Student	Project Title
Ethan Prabaharan	Development of a novel photo-angioplasty device for occlusive peripheral vascular disease
Sean Hirase	Treatment patterns and outcomes in advanced breast cancer in routine clinical practice
Blake Mills	Prevalence of co-morbid insomnia and obstructive sleep apnoea: Effect of ethnicity
Jesselyn Sin	Improving access to care for people experiencing addiction
Ulyana Kondratova	The Health4Her-automated effectiveness-implementation trial
Aloysius Amos Lau	Clinical Trial: MDMA-assisted prolonged exposure therapy for comorbid alcohol use disorder and PTSD
Sadaf Zafir and Janani Rajaram	Personality disorder and complex trauma
Yantong Wang and Bishaal Gurung	Comparing patient characteristics in ED visits for substance use pre and post policy interventions
Brittany Suttie	Audit of rheumatology patients admitted with Sepsis
Xin Yi (Zoe) Lim	Audit of large vessel vasculitis involving the aorta
Annie Guo	Review of cardiac sarcoidosis: Presentation, management and outcomes
Kristine Carlos	Audit of the utility of perioperative screening tools
Zacch Seah	Literature review of combined long-acting injectable antipsychotic treatment
Imogen Bowden	MOSAIC: Comparison of antipsychotic medication prescription after an educational intervention
Angelyn Neoh	Comparison of QTc measurement in mental health patients and healthy controls

EASTERN CLINICAL RESEARCH UNIT (ECRU)

DIRECTOR: PROF IAN DAVIS

ECRU has a proven record of success over many years. The Memorandum of Agreement between Eastern Health and Monash University relating to ECRU outlines the governance processes and the transparency of the financial model. This is formalised as an EHCS Standard Operating Procedure that includes a detailed roles and responsibilities document. This model ensures that clinical research at Eastern Health is of the highest quality, as are the processes for clinical and research governance, GCP oversight and compliance, documentation, budgets and financial management, ethics processes, staff training and development, insurance and indemnity, and stakeholder reporting. Most ECRU staff are employed by Monash University.

The ECRU model is completely transparent financially, meaning that any surplus clinical trial revenue is not lost to the “bottom line,” but rather is identified and quarantined to support otherwise under-resourced research activities. Resources are rolled back into Eastern Health to support quarantined research time, research fellows and other staff, and other costs related to research that otherwise would not be able to be supported. One example is that of investigator-initiated or cooperative group clinical trials, which often come with very limited budget support and are unattractive to many health services, despite the importance of the research questions. The ECRU model currently allows over 40% of our clinical trials to be of that nature, meaning that we do not only perform “contract research” for industry sponsors, but also perform a substantial number of trials aimed at answering key clinical questions as identified by the clinicians caring for these patients.

ECRU also provides processes and expertise for budget and contract negotiations, and Eastern Health benefits from very substantial, in-kind support provided for the financial management of ongoing trials. EHCS provides a dedicated team to assist with ethics submissions and post-submission processes, sparing individual units and researchers from much of the burden of this work. Monash University in turn gains academic standing and reputation for its performance of high quality and highly impactful clinical trials. It also benefits from the opportunities provided for training and for higher degree research students.

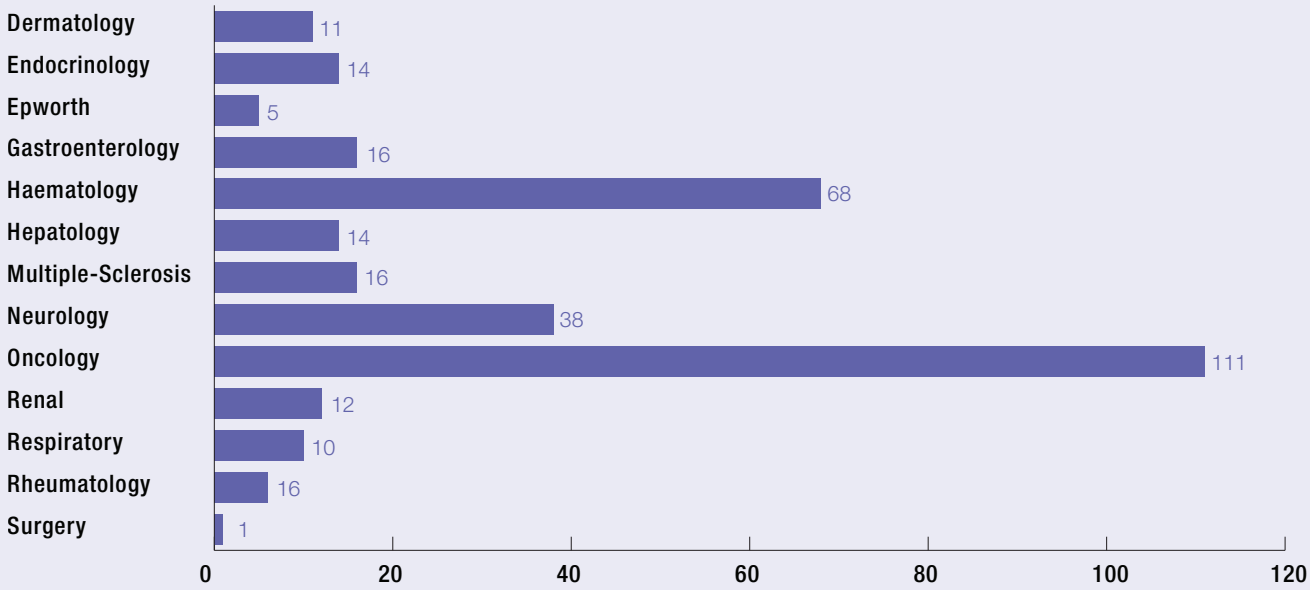


Fig 4: Breakdown of ECRU Trials in 2023 by Unit

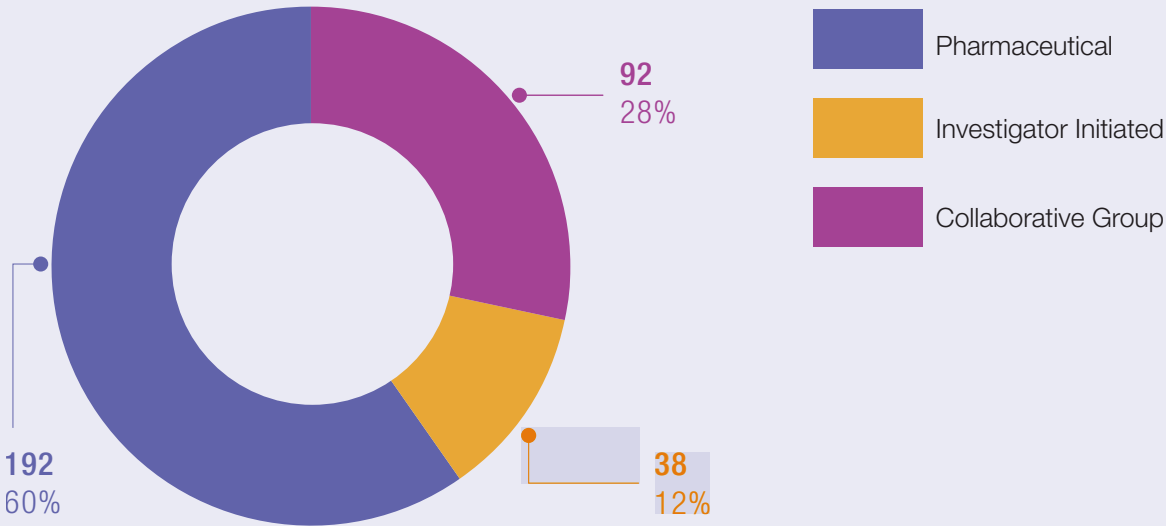


Fig 5: Active ECRU Trials in 2023 by Sponsorship Status

HEALTH SYSTEMS AND EQUITY

DIRECTOR: A/PROF JACQUELINE BOYLE

The Health Systems and Equity unit mission is to deliver excellence in health equity research, centred on people and community, and strengthening integrated health systems. As part of this, we provide leadership and education on equity and consumer and community involvement in research.

Our research themes include: Women’s Health, Person-Centred Care, Non-Communicable Disease Prevention, and Social and Emotional Wellbeing.

In 2023, our team contributed to 50 peer reviewed publications and edited an international leading textbook in obstetrics and gynaecology (Fundamentals of Obstetrics and Gynaecology). We secured research funding grants that included women from migrant and refugee backgrounds in the following areas: perinatal mental health, endometriosis health promotion, co-design in pregnancy and postpartum care health services, gestational diabetes and prevention of T2DM, interconception health services integration, and health promotion. The team presented at six national and six international conferences.

We launched our first short course in Health Equity in Research and aim to run this both in-person and online in the future.

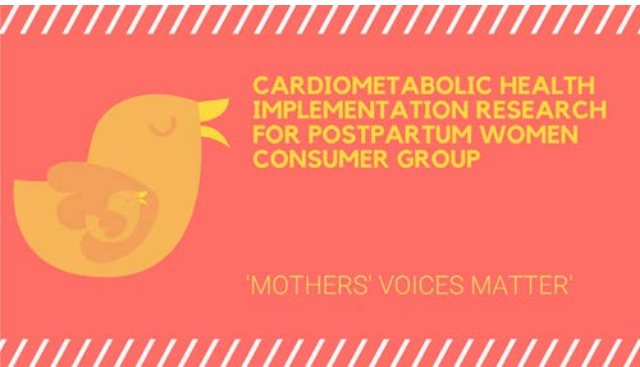
Investigators hold leadership, advisory, and committee roles in: ADA/EASD Precision Medicine in Diabetes; Nutrition Society of Australia Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity; Translating Research Outcomes into the Primary Health Interface (TROPHI); the Migrant and Refugee Health Partnership Council; the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Health Committee; the Australian Health Research Alliance Women’s Health Research and Translation Network; Children by Choice; and the World Stroke Organisation – Lancet Neurology Commission Stroke Collaboration Group.

NETWORKS

We convene one national and one international network.



Under the auspices of CRE HiPP, we run the National Preconception Network (the Network) which was formed to link clinicians, community members, NGOs and researchers keen to improve preconception health. The Network shares information through newsletters and webinars and has contributed to government enquiries. The Network has also developed key research priorities and core indicators to monitor preconception health. However, our unit has led work identifying that these data that assess core indicators are not reported and this is an area for future focus.



Cardiometabolic Health Implementation Research for Postpartum individuals (ChiRP) is a team of international researchers interested in improving the health and wellbeing of women with young children. A consumer group with over 60 individuals, born in more than 20 countries, informs this work.

EARLY AND MID-CAREER RESEARCHER SUCCESS

One of our PhD students, Wubet Worku Takele, is undertaking work on geospatial mapping of gestational diabetes and was selected by abstract for an oral presentation of his work at the RANZCOG ASM in Perth.

PRIZES AND AWARDS

Rajshree Thapa: Awarded the Future Leaders Award from the Victorian Heart Institute.

Siew Lim: Awarded two HiPPP EMCR prizes at the annual conference for Best Publication and for Consumer and Stakeholder Engagement.

Asvini Subasinghe: awarded the Best Oral presentation EMCR at the HiPPP EMCR conference 2023.

Asvini Subasinghe was also awarded a place in the prestigious Oxford University International Primary Care Leadership Programme (Cohort 15), which runs from 2023-2025. As part of the programme, each year Asvini spends one week staying on campus attending leadership and management workshops, participating in team building exercises and growing international networks with other primary care researchers across Europe and the UK. She also receives one-on-one coaching for 12 months.



Asvini Subasinghe (left, front row) with her Cohort 15 colleagues

HIGHLIGHTED PROJECTS

EQUITY AND THE LIFE! PROGRAM

Investigators: Siew Lim, Rajshree Thapa, Jacqueline Boyle

Funding: Vanguard

Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (GDM) is a common complication affecting 9-26% of pregnancies worldwide. GDM doubles the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) (i.e. heart disease) and increases the risk of long-term Type 2 Diabetes (T2DM) by up to 10-fold. Non-White ethnicities and lower socioeconomic status further increase the risk of CVD and T2DM. Screening and lifestyle intervention effectively prevent CVD and T2DM in women after GDM, but our previous work shows that engagement with T2DM prevention differs by social indices. This study investigates inequities in a state-wide lifestyle program, Life!, in prevention of CVD and T2DM in women with previous gestational diabetes, co-design equitable health service changes with Diabetes Victoria, and develop an implementation and evaluation plan.

BABY READY? IMPROVING PRECONCEPTION HEALTH:

Investigators: Jacqueline Boyle, Asvini Subasinghe

Funding: Monash Institute of Medical Engineering, NHMRC through the Centre of Research Excellence for Health in Preconception and Pregnancy

Preconception health is recommended to support individuals to plan a pregnancy and support their health and wellbeing and that of a future baby. Many individuals experience barriers that affect engagement with preconception health advice and care, yet have an interest in learning more.

Baby Ready? Digital health resource. This is a personalised preconception health resource co-designed with women from diverse communities in partnership with Action Lab at the Faculty of IT, Monash. The development phase is complete, content development is underway and the launch and evaluation will begin in the latter part of 2024.

WOMEN'S HEALTH INCUBATOR (WHINC): A COLLABORATION WITH ACTION LAB AND SEACO

Investigators: Siew Lim, Jacqueline Boyle

The Women's Health INCubator (WHInc) project is run in conjunction with the South East Asia Community Observatory (SEACO) as part of a collaboration with Action Lab.

Women's health in South and South East Asia is a pressing concern for the global health community. Effective data infrastructure in health and a demographic surveillance platform, such as SEACO, across multiple countries, are important to advance women's health in the region. The WHInc project builds on a pilot project conducted in Segamat, Malaysia, with the SEACO team.

The pilot project identified stakeholders and developed a prototype on community participatory processes in developing a data platform for the community.

PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR WOMEN FROM MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Investigators: Jacqueline Boyle, Asvini Subasinghe

Funding : MRFF

This project, co-designed with community investigators, focuses on the perinatal mental health of women from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia, who experience increased risks for adverse mental health and wellbeing, compared to Australian-born women. A key outcome of this project will be a deep understanding of what the perinatal mental health needs, including digital health resources, are for women from migrant and refugee backgrounds, to facilitate equity in outcomes.



Siew Lim, Nurual Binti Osman and Jacqueline Boyle at SEACO

RESEARCH VIGNETTE

USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO IMPROVE OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH POTENTIAL VOLUNTEERS FOR CLINICAL TRIALS

BITHI SARKAR, ECRU ENDOCRINOLOGY TEAM

The ECRU Endocrinology and Diabetes team re-launched their Facebook page in 2023, with better marketing strategies to achieve better engagement and trust with potential volunteers.

We formulated strategies to strengthen our marketing and recruitment efforts through a new digital media project. We identified a lack of an online presence and audience trust in an increasing digital age. Moreover, we felt a disconnect with our existing volunteers and losing demographics relevant to our trials.

The primary purpose was to establish a branded social media presence and onboard new volunteers to our trials. A secondary goal was to frequently update information on multiple webpages with our partners, including Eastern Health and Monash University.

Some of our social media strategies included creating branded media assets and sharing news, podcasts, and health tips to engage with our volunteers on Facebook. We advertised upcoming trials to get new leads and converted them into participants for our trials.

For our website management, we contributed to creating a consistent brand tone and establishing a brand voice. This was achieved through careful messaging that represented our culture to first-time website visitors.

These strategies helped us kickstart our journey in generating a brand presence and establishing trust. We increased our page followers through effective calls-to-action and organic marketing. Additionally, our Facebook advertisements resulted in over 300 leads and our interactions with them highlighted their faith in our brand.

The project highlight was getting high praise for this project by our longstanding study participants during our annual Christmas luncheon in 2023.

MONASH ADDICTION RESEARCH CENTRE

DIRECTOR: PROF DAN LUBMAN AM AND
DEPUTY DIRECTOR: PROF SUZANNE NIELSEN

The Monash Addiction Research Centre (MARC) has 140 academic members across 30 departments in six faculties and two institutes, making it one of the largest addiction centres in the world.

MARC's mission is to provide national thought leadership, education, and research excellence to develop, deliver and evaluate effective policy and practice approaches for addiction.

In FY2023, MARC secured more than \$24M in research funding and published 184 peer-reviewed articles. This success demonstrates the enormous impact MARC members are making in the field of addiction and the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in finding solutions to the challenges of addiction.

In May, MARC held its annual symposium, bringing together everyone in one room to celebrate the incredible addiction-related projects being carried out across Monash by researchers at all career stages. The day began with an enlightening keynote presentation by Dr Annie Madden AO (Executive Director of Harm Reduction Australia) on drug user representation and its significance over the past three decades. It was followed by engaging plenary sessions covering priority populations, technology and treatment, quantifying addiction-related harms, a thought-provoking panel discussion with Dr Annie Madden AO, A/Prof Kate Seear (Principal Research Fellow in the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, Australian Research Council Future Fellow), Distinguished Prof Robin Room (Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, La Trobe University) and panel moderator Mietta Gibson (MARC Advisory Board chair) on human rights and drug law reform.

MARC also continued to support career development for EMCRs with targeted grant work workshops and the inaugural MARC Publication Prize launch. The MARC Publication Prize aims to recognise excellence and support MARC EMCR and PhD candidates in developing a strong research publication track record.

MARC's network of talented PhD students continued to grow and thrive. We were delighted to see recipients of the first round of MARC Top-up Scholarship funding, Michael Curtis and Louisa Picco, finishing their PhDs. Dr Curtis' PhD examined the impact of retention in opioid agonist treatment on substance use, health and health service use among men recently released from prison. Dr Louisa Picco's thesis related to identifying and responding to prescription opioid-related risk using two well-adopted approaches – prescription drug monitoring programs and clinical screening tools. Dr Picco received a prestigious National Health and Medical Research Council Emerging Leader Fellowship to continue this research for a further five years.

In 2023, MARC strengthened its policy and advocacy work by actively engaging with state and federal government inquiries through three policy submissions on critical issues such as stigma reduction, regulation of gambling and liquor, and Victorian gambling reforms. Additionally, MARC researchers provided evidence at parliamentary hearings and inquiries, furthering our commitment to shaping evidence-based policies.

MARC SYMPOSIUM PRIZE WINNERS

Best PhD Poster Prize Award – Ramez Bathish for the poster titled '*Key principles for minimising stigmatising language: A thematic analysis of alcohol and other drug-related language guides*'.

Best EMCR Poster Prize Award – Dr James Gooden for the poster titled '*Beyond the ice: Differences in biopsychosocial risk factors and neuropsychological profiles among individuals with histories of alcohol or methamphetamine-polysubstance use.*'



INAUGURAL MARC PUBLICATION PRIZE WINNERS

Best PhD Publication Prize Award – Louisa Picco for the publication titled ‘*How do patient, pharmacist and medication characteristics and prescription drug monitoring program alerts influence pharmacists’ decisions to dispense opioids? A randomised controlled factorial experiment.*’

Best EMCR Publication Prize Award – Dr Amanda Cross for the publication titled ‘*Barriers and enablers to monitoring and deprescribing opioid analgesics for chronic non-cancer pain: a systematic review with qualitative evidence synthesis using the Theoretical Domains Framework.*’

RESEARCH FUNDING HIGHLIGHTS

DEEP END LIVING LAB: BETTER SUPPORT FOR HEALTHY AGEING IN HOMELESS POPULATIONS

MARC Investigators: Dr Liz Sturgiss, Prof Suzanne Nielsen, Prof Philip Mendes

Funder: The National Centre for Healthy Ageing

People who are homeless have less opportunity to age healthily. They have much lower life expectancy and greater rates of chronic disease than the rest of the community. Frankston has over 400 homeless people with a high number of rough sleepers.

This study aims to screen routine healthcare records from the Healthy Ageing Data Platform for markers of homelessness, learn from their lived experience, and co-design solutions to improve their aging and health experience.

This project is a collaboration between the NCHA, Monash University, Monash Addiction Research Centre, Eastern Health Clinical School, Peninsula Health, and the University of Glasgow.

CREATING A WORLD-STANDARD ENRICHED OLDER-ADULT COHORT TO INFORM MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER PREVENTION

MARC Investigators: Prof Suzanne Nielsen, Dr Tina Lam, Dr Aislinn Lalor, Dr Nadine Andrew, Prof Paul Dietze, A/Prof Shalini Arunogiri, Prof Keith Hill, Dr Laura Alfrey

Funder: The National Centre for Healthy Ageing and the Ian Potter Foundation

Australia’s large ‘baby boomer’ cohort have riskier drinking patterns than previous and younger generations, and older adults experience unique risk factors for developing anxiety and depression with more than half of cases of depression beginning in later life. This will create new challenges for healthcare delivery and healthy ageing.

We will develop an enriched cohort of older Australians and follow them through high risk transition periods to, for the first time, enable a detailed understanding of risk factors for developing anxiety, depression and substance use disorders during these higher-risk periods. Through co-design we will ensure that (i) recruitment and data collection methods will maximise participation of older adults in the cohort, and (ii) that the findings are relevant to older adults and those who provide care to older adults.

Our enriched cohort of older Australians will examine social connection, mental health and substance use disorders during high-risk periods (e.g. transition to retirement) to inform prevention strategies and support healthier ageing.

This project is a collaboration between Eastern Health Clinical School; Monash Addiction Research Centre; Occupational Therapy, Peninsula Clinical School; Evidence Synthesis Qualitative and Implementation Methods, School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine; School of Primary and Allied Health Care; and School of Curriculum Teaching & Inclusive Education.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM COMPLETED RESEARCH PROJECTS

HEALTH NEEDS OF PEOPLE ATTENDING THE MEDICALLY SUPERVISED INJECTING ROOM (MSIR)

MARC Investigators: Prof Suzanne Nielsen, Prof Dan Lubman, Dr Shalini Arunogiri, Dr Tina Lam, Dr Tony Barnett

Funder: Victorian Department of Health Review Panel

Research commissioned by the Department of Health Review Panel and undertaken by the Monash Addiction Research Centre (MARC) shows that almost two-thirds (63%) of a sample of MSIR clients have experienced multiple (seven or more) serious life events, compared to 21% of people in the general population. Almost four in ten (39 per cent) MSIR clients met the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), compared to just over 1% of people in the general population. The mental health challenges faced by MSIR clients are significant.

Project resources

Review of the Medically Supervised Injecting Room – final report.

DETERMINING THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS ON PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

MARC Investigators: Prof Paul Dietze, A/Prof Joseph Doyle, Prof Mark Stoove

Funder: National Health and Medical Research Council

Most published work on the impacts of COVID-19 on patterns of drug use relies on information collected from cross-sectional studies of convenience samples of people who use drugs. In this study we took advantage of the SuperMIX and VMAX cohort studies of people who inject drugs and people who smoke methamphetamine, both of which recruited samples before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, to determine the impacts of COVID-19 on patterns of drug use and harm in Melbourne and Victoria.

We also sampled key cohort members who have experienced the impacts of lockdowns and associated restrictions for in-depth qualitative interviews about the effects of these restrictions on their lives. Compared with the pre-COVID-19 period, methamphetamine prices increased by AUD\$351.63 (P value <0.001) and by AUD\$456.51 (P value <0.001) in Melbourne and regional Victoria, respectively, during the period in which the most intense public health measures were implemented in Victoria. Although prices decreased after harder restrictions were lifted (by AUD\$232.84, P value <0.001 and AUD\$263.68, P value <0.001, in Melbourne and regional Victoria, respectively), they remained higher than pre-COVID-19 levels. A complementary 76% decrease was observed in relation to methamphetamine use frequency in regional Victoria (P value = 0.006) that was not offset by any changes in the frequency of use of other drugs such as alcohol, tobacco or other illicit drugs. Conclusion: COVID-19 public health measures in Victoria appear to have been associated with major price changes in the methamphetamine market and decreased frequency of use of the drug.

PERSISTENCE OF OPIOID USE FOLLOWING SURGICAL ADMISSION

MARC Investigators: Dr Tina Lam, Dr Ting Xia, Prof Dan Lubman

Funder: The study was funded by an untied educational grant from CSL Seqirus.

The type of opioid prescribed to patients following surgery can impact long-term use, a new study has found.

This study, the first of its kind in Australia, compared the opioid types tapentadol and oxycodone on the outcome of longer-term use, and found lower rates of longer-term use for patients prescribed tapentadol in particular surgical sub groups.

Clinical guidelines suggest that the administering of pain medication should usually cease within one week post surgery. The study looked at patients who were continuing to use opioids three months post surgery, a period when most people are expected to no longer be taking pain-relieving medication.

The study analysed the records of 120,000 hospital patients who were discharged from surgery across three Australian states. The study examined various subgroups of these patients, including by the type of surgery they had, whether they were prescribed immediate-release or slower-release opioid formulations, and whether they had a history of using opioids prior to surgery. Most patients are not using opioids prior to surgery (are “opioid naïve”), and the clinical guidelines recommend immediate-release formulations for post-surgical analgesia. So, the main group of interest for this study were opioid-naïve patients who were prescribed immediate-release formulations at discharge.

Opioid-naïve patients on immediate-release opioids were analysed twice – firstly as one large group of patients who were discharged from different types of surgeries, and secondly by examining only the patients who had orthopaedic surgery. The first analysis, which combined the 66,000 patients with different types of surgeries, did not find any significant effect of discharge opioid type on opioid use at 3 months after surgery. In contrast, the sub-analysis with 20,000 orthopaedic patients found tapentadol was associated with lower odds of longer-term use.

Historically, oxycodone has been routinely prescribed as the main analgesic for post-surgical pain relief. While tapentadol has been on the market for the best part of 10 years, it has only been in the last 5 years that it has been more widely used.

Around 70 percent of patients are prescribed post-operative opioids, and patients who are commenced on opioids in hospital are at risk of developing long-term opioid use. Given this is one of the first studies specifically looking at tapentadol as a discharge opioid on longer-term outcomes, the clinical outcomes may see clinicians take into consideration the longer-term side effects of these opioids when prescribing post-operative pain relief to patients.

The study has been published in Anaesthesia, the official journal of the Association of Anaesthetists. To read the full open-access paper, visit:

<https://associationofanaesthetists-publications.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/anae.15933>

LABORATORY PROGRAM

EHCS has a laboratory facility at 5 Arnold Street, primarily involved in the activities of the uro-oncology research group led by Prof Ian Davis and Prof Shomik Sengupta. The laboratory also provides support for other groups, including higher degree research students or other researchers undertaking laboratory research, and for clinical trial study coordinators needing to process clinical samples. Dr Pavel Sluka and Mr Hady Wardan are the scientists in the laboratory who undertake the work and provide support to those needing it. The laboratory team manages the equipment, reagents, and facilities required for laboratory research, including maintenance of the -20°C and -80°C freezers and liquid nitrogen storage facilities. The space is also shared by staff from the Victorian Cancer Biobank.

The uro-oncology laboratory continued its active research project supported by an NHMRC Investigator Grant awarded to Prof Davis. The project involves measurement of DNA derived from urothelial cancer that can be detected in blood or urine. The group developed a process for detecting this circulating tumour DNA (ctDNA) or urine tumour DNA (utDNA) using a highly specific and sensitive droplet digital PCR (ddPCR) technology, obtained through an equipment grant from Monash University. Some of this work has also been supported with funding from Eastern Health Foundation. Work in 2023 extended previous work with the ddPCR platform, studying tissue, blood, and urine samples from patients with urothelial cancers that were either non-muscle-invasive or muscle-invasive or metastatic. Grant applications have been submitted to support a range of clinical trial initiatives aimed at using this technology to monitor cancer status in the context of usual treatment, and to aid diagnosis of residual disease after treatment. The hope is that this technology may ultimately be used to assist in decision-making by patients, meaning that complex or disabling treatment might be able to be limited to those who need it most, and patients at low risk of recurrence or progression might be able to avoid such treatments.

The laboratory research program continued its productivity in 2023. We have developed a robust system for detection of very small amounts of tumour DNA, using panels of gene mutations that are frequently expressed in either muscle-invasive or non-muscle-invasive bladder urothelial cancers. The droplet digital PCR technique has now been tested in large numbers of patient tumour samples and we have shown it to be more accurate and sensitive than conventional Next-Generation Sequencing techniques. We have used the methodology to look for tumour DNA in blood and in urine. The results of this work led to the award of an NHMRC

Investigator Grant to Prof Davis, which will be used to support the laboratory components of a suite of clinical trials where the method will be applied. The overall objective is to identify patients at higher or lower risk of adverse cancer outcomes and to tailor their treatment accordingly, so that patients at higher risk can escalate their treatment while those at lower risk may be able to avoid unnecessary treatment.

Dr Antara Karmakar undertook an MSurg degree through our group and used this approach as a key component of her project.

Other laboratory projects in the uro-oncology group in 2023:

- **Water irrigation:** previous work by Dr Mo Li (MSurg) and Dr Ruchira Nandurkar (PhD) was funded by an ANZUP Below the Belt Research Grant and showed that water could be used safely to irrigate the bladder after resection of non-muscle-invasive bladder cancer. This approach might also reduce the risk of recurrence or progression. An NHMRC grant application to support a proposed clinical trial of this approach was unfortunately unsuccessful, and other avenues of support are being sought.
- **Genomic analysis of non-muscle-invasive bladder cancer:** Dr Pavel Sluka led a study of detailed genomic sequencing of tissue samples to assess the accuracy and concordance of ddPCR-based analysis. This showed that ddPCR was accurate, much more sensitive, and had considerably less false results than conventional next-generation sequencing.

UNIT HIGHLIGHTS

AGED MEDICINE RESEARCH AND TEACHING

PROF PĒTERIS DĀRZIŅŠ

ACTIONABLE DASHBOARDS PROJECT AT EASTERN HEALTH – ADAPT EH

The National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards provide a nationally consistent statement of the level of care consumers can expect from health service organisations. Historically, external assessment of meeting standards was conducted on a 3-year cycle by independent accreditation agencies. Health services expended significant resources in the months leading up to a manual assessment. Australia is now moving to short-notice assessments which will reduce the burden of preparation, but organisations will require internal monitoring capacity to ensure readiness for an assessment. Funded through the Digital Health Collaborative Research Centre (DHCRC) in Australia (DHCRC-0108), Monash FMNHS through Eastern Health Clinical School, along with the Faculty of IT has partnered with Eastern Health, the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS), and the Victorian Department of Health to generate near real-time dashboards presenting relevant patient information from the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) in an easily accessible and digestible context that can be used by clinical staff for monitoring care and by accreditation agencies for assessment purposes.

The “Actionable Dashboards Project at Eastern Health” (ADaPt EH) is a collaborative approach to addressing the challenges of both short-notice assessments and near real-time monitoring of standards internally.



ADaPt EH used a co-design approach working with key stakeholders, in particular Eastern Health and the accreditation agency (ACHS), to identify measures used in standards assessment that could be generated from the EMR. Existing “scorecards” (used for health care monitoring and manual assessments) informed the data extraction and calculation of measures of importance, allowing creation of a secure data warehouse, from which PowerBI was used for interactive visualisation of the data. Health service Quality Managers, Clinical Risk Managers, and University researchers conducted data validation. Qualitative feedback was gathered via focus groups and interviews with key clinical staff, unit managers and quality managers, as well as accreditation agency assessors, to investigate quality of care outcomes, dashboard content, design and functionality, and clinical governance.

EHCS staff with clinical appointments may have come across the completed dashboards which have begun a socialisation and evaluation phase. A suite of interactive dashboards reflecting seven of the eight national standards has been developed and are in the final stages of validation and introduction into the clinical setting. If you haven’t come across them yet, you will in the near future!

Early evaluation indicates not only were dashboards visually appealing but featured useful resources such as trend observation over time and gave clinical staff the ability to drill down from a unit or ward level report to an individual patient. Overall, acceptance of dashboards in practice occurred rapidly, and often led to suggestions of further dashboard development to enhance care and streamline services. For EH staff who have experienced the dashboards so far, there has been a high level of enthusiasm for the role of dashboards and willingness to engage with them to monitor and improve patient care.

The project timeline is from July 2022-June 2025 and as we complete the suite of planned dashboards, we move into phase 3 of the project which explores the potential use in other settings and the commercialisation opportunities this may present. EHCS is providing significant clinical and research expertise into this project with several staff involved including Prof Ian Davis and Prof Pēteris Dārziņš as Chief Investigators, Greg Duncan as the project manager and Cathy Ngo and Al Shamsavand as research fellows.

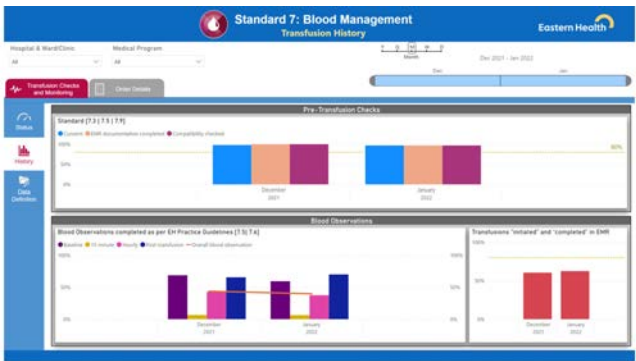
Here are a couple examples of the high-level dashboards generate (using a dummy data set, so they do not represent any Eastern Health data). Keep in mind the ability to significantly drill down from large population reports to individual patients as required. If you would like to discuss the project or explore potential applications please contact the project manager Greg Duncan (Gregory.duncan@monash.edu).

Dummy data dashboard screenshots for Standard 7 (Blood Management)

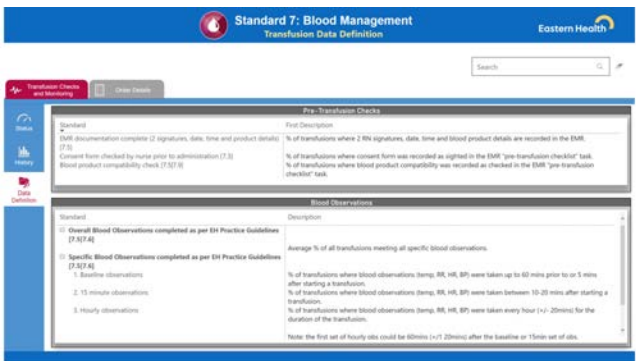
1. Point in time summary



2. Trend over time



3. Dashboard data definitions



Dummy data dashboard screenshots for Standard 4 (Medication Safety)

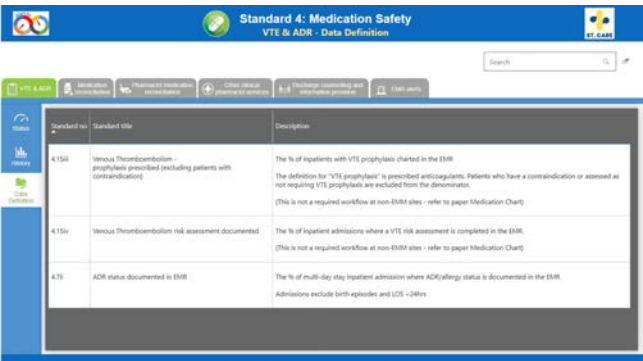
1. Point in time summary



2. Trend over time



3. Dashboard data definitions



We would like to highlight the excellent collaborative work that our Residential InReach service have done in conjunction with our Emergency Department colleagues in recent months.

FALLS OUTREACH AND RESIDENTIAL MOBILE ASSESSMENT TEAM – FORMAT PROJECT

The FORMAT project was a collaboration between Eastern Health INREACH and our Emergency Departments. Our aim was to offer care in place to residents in Aged Care Homes who had fallen, without significant injury, regardless of anticoagulant/antiplatelet status and who chose (either the Resident or their Medical Decision maker when appropriate) to remain at their Residential Aged Care Home (RACH) as an alternative to being transferred to the Emergency Department.

We submitted a successful grant application to the Society to Improve Diagnosis in Medicine (SIDM) and received a SEED grant which has afforded us the opportunity to formalise the results of our project. Our FORMAT video was presented at the conference in Cleveland, Ohio in 2023 and we were part of a panel of other project participants to answer questions from the audience. The FORMAT presentation was well received particularly by Nursing staff that attended the conference and felt that the Australian Nurses were “very progressive.”

Eastern Health INREACH continues to attend to residents who have fallen in RACHs and support care in place when appropriate. The INREACH team has seen over 490 residents who have fallen since the FORMAT project commenced in May 2022.

Consumer feedback has highlighted the significant personal value that many residents and their families have gained from this service:

‘The In-Reach department team observed my father on a number of occasions after a fall. Contact was made promptly and I was informed of the injury in detail. Furthermore, I was given the opportunity to ask questions about the care my father was receiving as a result of the fall. I appreciated the efforts of the INREACH team as their assessment was preferable to my father going to ED. The environment would have been too distressing and noisy for him unlike the quieter and more familiar surrounds of Mooroolbark.’

‘It was great to receive a phone call from the doctor who consulted mum. The doctor explained everything in detail and advised some further strategies for the future. I was very happy and hope this facility is kept running’’

‘Very pleased with the INREACH service provided for my mother – previous hospital ED visits were very distressing.

Donna Pattison, Clinical Nurse Consultant and Team Leader, Eastern Health INREACH



A/Prof Paul Buntine, CNC Donna Pattison and CNC Julie Oliver at the SIDM conference in Cleveland, Ohio.

CARDIOLOGY

MS CHARIS BROWN, CARDIOLOGY RESEARCH COORDINATOR

KEY CONTACTS

- Dr Jennifer Cooke, Head of Cardiology
- Dr Jason Nogie, Clinical Lead, Cardiac Intervention
- A/Prof Jaya Chandrasekhar
- A/Prof Andrew Teh
- Dr Melanie Freeman

The Department of Cardiology at Eastern Health is well positioned for research due to significant service demand and diverse patient populations. In 2023, Cardiology has seen a strengthening of its research program after challenges during pandemic years, as it continues to build contributions to clinical research and registries. Eastern Health Cardiology has several focus streams for research which includes digital technology, microvascular disease, and intervention. Our cardiologists and advanced trainees also regularly utilise state registry data for research projects and publications. We have also seen a considerable increase in the number of participants recruited to our two Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection (SCAD) registries,, working with Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian investigators to help understand this infrequent but distressing occurrence. Plans for participation in an Australian Bifurcation Registry are also in progress.

Cardiology made several national congress submissions with particular focus on the PRECISE-DAPT score to help guide dual antiplatelet therapy post PCI. This follows an Eastern Health Foundation grant received by A/Prof Jaya Chandrasekhar using platelet reactivity testing to assess drug responsiveness.

Cardiology has continued with a Safer Care Victoria collaboration together with General Medicine with specific emphasis on reducing Heart Failure admissions through the implementation of a specialist nurse for education and on-referral to HARP or rehabilitation programs. Contributions to Heart Failure research is anticipated to continue throughout 2024 along with Cardiology Interventional trials.

INTER/NATIONAL RESEARCH REGISTRIES

ANZ-SCAD – Australian and New Zealand Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection registry

CAN-SCAN – Canadian Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection registry

VCOR/MIG – Victorian Cardiac Outcomes Registry/ Melbourne Interventional Group



DERMATOLOGY

PROF JOHN SU

RESEARCH PROJECTS

- ROCKET-Horizon: A phase 3, randomized, 24-week, placebo-controlled, double-blind study to assess the efficacy, safety and tolerability of rocatinlimab (AMG 451) monotherapy in adult subjects with moderate-to-severe atopic dermatitis.
- ANB019-301 (Gemini 1+2): A phase 3, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study to evaluate the efficacy and safety of imsidolimab (ANB019) in the treatment of adult subjects with generalized pustular psoriasis + LTE (Sponsor: AnaptysBio).
- ASLAN004-003: A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, multicenter, dose-ranging trial to evaluate the efficacy and safety of ASLAN004 (eblasakimab) in adult patients with moderate-to-severe atopic dermatitis (Sponsor: ASLAN Pharmaceuticals).
- Pedistad: Evaluation of biomarkers of atopic dermatitis in pediatric patients whose disease is not adequately controlled with topical prescription therapies or when those therapies are not medically advisable (Sponsor: Sanofi).
- OBS15333: A prospective, observational, longitudinal study in pediatric patients with moderate to severe atopic dermatitis whose disease is not adequately controlled with topical therapies or when those therapies are not medically advisable (Sponsor: Sanofi).
- M18-891 (Measure Up 2): A phase 3, randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blind study to evaluate upadacitinib in adolescent and adult subjects with moderate to severe atopic dermatitis (Sponsor: AbbVie).
- The PEBBLES study: A randomised controlled study to reduce the risk of asthma by prevention of eczema (a collaboration between Monash University and the University of Melbourne. A. Lowe, J. Su S. Dharmage, M. Tang and collaborators).
- Addressing disparities in health care for atopic dermatitis (J. Su, A Yazdabadi, A. Courtney and collaborators).

EDUCATION

- We continue to host the annual eczema pre-ASM workshop at the Australasian College of Dermatologist Annual Scientific Meeting and also the Eczema school for public education.
- We have been selected to host the International Society of Atopic Dermatitis Congress in Melbourne in October 2025.
- Drs Ly and Van Ammers have produced a podcast on Spotify on skin biopsy to assist junior medical staff at Eastern Health.

EASTERN CLINICAL RESEARCH UNIT TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH DIVISION (ECRU-TRD)

A/PROF ANTHONY DEAR

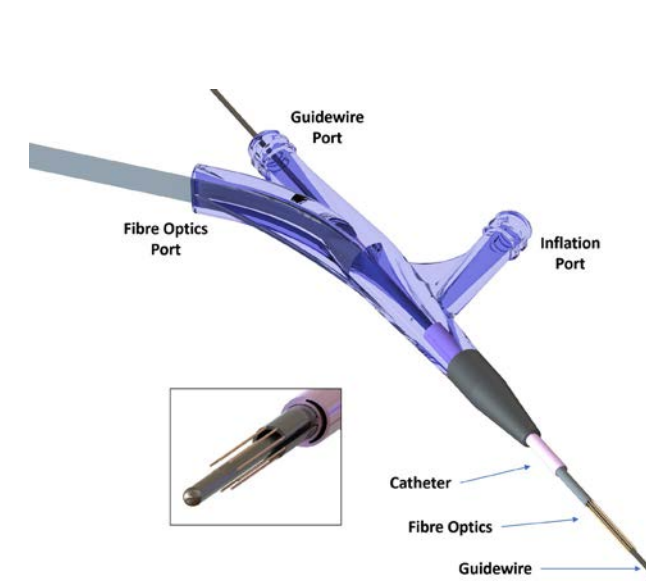
ECRU-TRD enjoyed a return to full post-COVID activity during 2023 with significant developments across the full spectrum of Unit activities.

RESEARCH

TRANSLATIONAL

Lumi-Solve

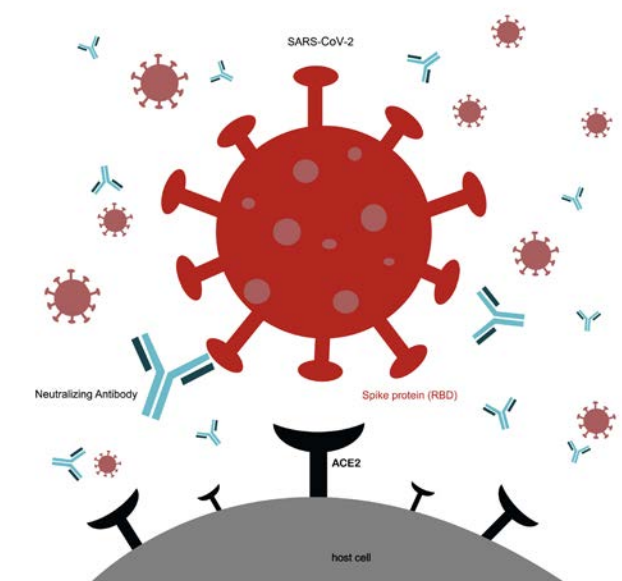
The Unit's flag-ship project, Lumi-Solve, a multi-institutional collaborative venture, supported by NHMRC and aimed at development, evaluation, and commercialisation of a novel photo-angioplasty device for the treatment of restenosis in peripheral vascular disease has seen considerable progress during 2023 with design of a novel angioplasty catheter hub, in collaboration with our Monash Institute of Medical Engineering (MIME) colleagues, to accommodate the fibre-optic technology integral to Lumi-Solve operation. In addition, the University of Queensland, now onboard as our collaborator for the in vivo evaluation of Lumi-Solve, has finalized animal model study protocols heralding an exciting new phase in the development of the device.



Novel Lumi-Solve catheter hub design.

COVID-19

COVID-19, whilst largely controlled with effective vaccines and antiviral therapy, remains a source of considerable disease burden in the community with identification of novel therapies for the prevention and treatment of severe COVID-19; a key goal of current biomedical research efforts. Repurposing of existing, approved agents for the prevention and treatment of severe COVID-19 disease offers an attractive option in this space. We have identified the previously approved agent and epigenetic drug romidepsin, currently used in the treatment of blood cancers, as having therapeutic potential in the management of COVID-19 with our studies demonstrating regulation of two critical molecules, ACE2 and TMPRSS2, required for cellular entry of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Our ongoing studies will evaluate the mechanisms of action and anti-viral activity of romidepsin-mediated modulation of these molecules to establish the therapeutic potential of this agent for the treatment of severe COVID-19.

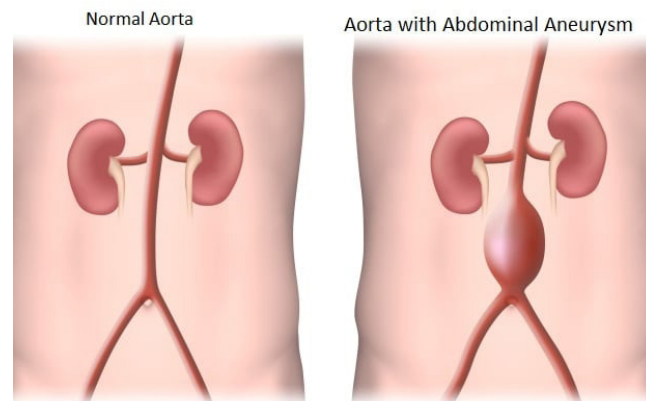


ACE2 and TMPRSS2 modulate SARS CoV2 cellular entry

CLINICAL TRIALS AND PATIENT MANAGEMENT

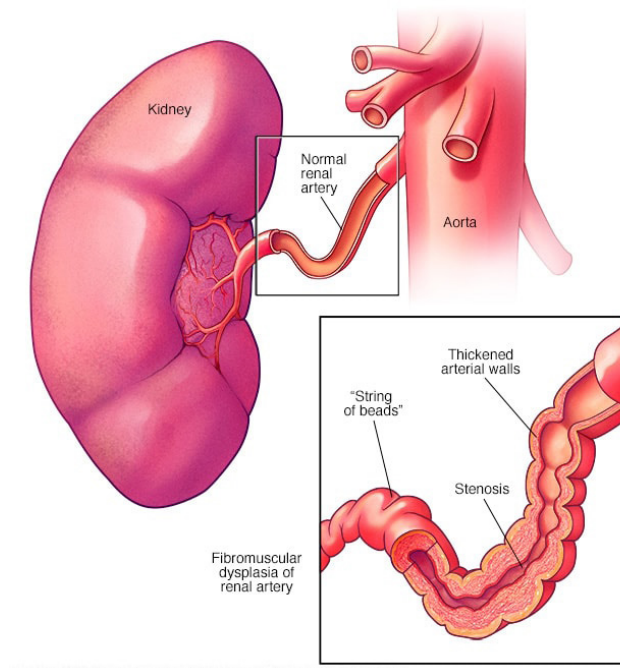
METFORMIN IN ABDOMINAL AORTIC ANEURYSM TRIAL (MAT)

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) disease can have catastrophic outcomes, particularly in the setting of out of hospital rupture. To date there are no medical therapies for this serious condition which affects up to 1% of men over the age of 55 years. The Metformin in Abdominal aortic aneurysm Trial (MAT) aims to evaluate the well-established anti-diabetic medication metformin for its potential to offer, for the first time, the exciting prospect of a medical treatment to prevent AAA growth and rupture. In 2023 Eastern Health, Box Hill, as a principal national recruitment center for this international study continued to make a significant contribution to the study establishing a collaboration with Professor Chris Askew of the University of the Sunshine Coast University to facilitate recruitment opportunities through local private vascular surgical practices.



FIBROMUSCULAR DYSPLASIA

Fibromuscular dysplasia (FMD) is a rare blood vessel disorder predominantly affecting caucasian females and characterised by potentially severe complications including arterial dissection, occlusion, aneurysm formation and rupture. We have recently reported on the potential for enhanced blood vessel imaging protocols combined with novel genetic factors to aid in identification of at-risk patients which may facilitate early therapeutic intervention to avert specific FMD complications.

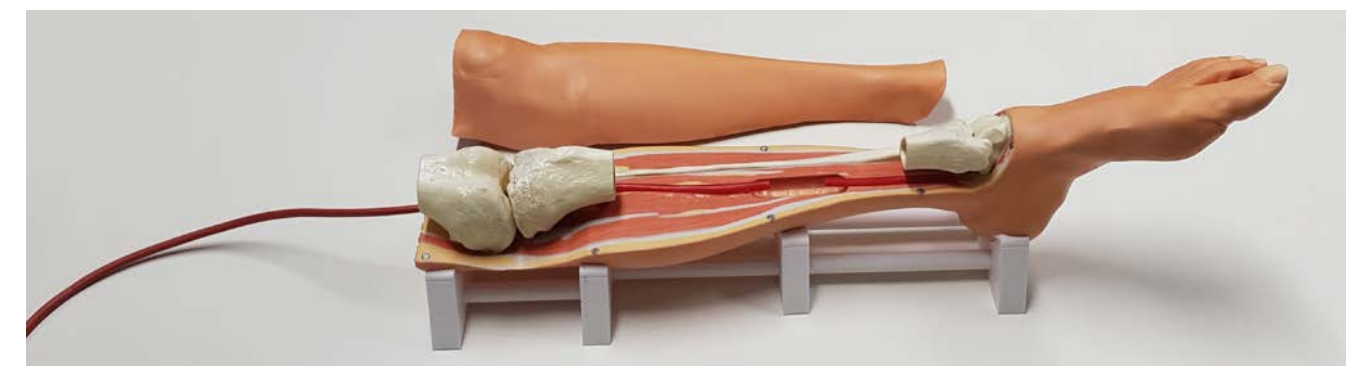


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RESEARCH COMMERCIALISATION

The Lumi-Solve programme is ECRU-TRD's principal research commercialisation endeavour. Intellectual property protection of the novel catheter hub design and fibre-optics through provisional patenting remained a key goal in 2023. In addition, partnering with prototype production companies Innovative Catheter Solutions (Ireland) and POBA (USA) facilitated evaluation of Lumi-Solve design specifications and manufacturing parameters to enable production of prototype devices for preclinical and early-phase clinical studies. FMNHS design and development of the Lumi-Solve website together with selection of Lumi-Solve for the CSIRO ON Prime commercialisation programme significantly aided in exposure of the project with a view to attracting potential investor capital.

Novel chemistry associated with the Lumi-Solve programme also attracted the attention of the global cancer-focused research tools biorepository CancerTools.org. ECRU-TRD through Monash University entered into a revenue sharing agreement with CancerTools.org to supply the novel photo-activated histone deacetylase inhibitor, Photo-MCT-3, to all researchers interested in exploring the compound's biological potential. It is envisaged that the CancerTool.org global outreach digital platform will further showcase the work of ERCU-TRD and potentially generate a revenue stream to further novel research initiatives.



Lower limb 3D printed anatomy model for teaching and education of lower limb angioplasty procedures

TEACHING AND EDUCATION

As part of ECRU-TRD's ongoing commitment to student teaching and education, an interactive medical device programme has been established enabling students and trainees to engage with real-world medical devices and 3D printed anatomy models to facilitate hands-on learning experiences as part of their medical, nursing and resident training.

Congratulations to Asvini Alada who successfully completed her PHY3990 project in the Unit and has now transferred to post-graduate medical studies at Monash and also to Aldous Tria, Loren Spiegel and Anak Dharma, Monash University final year engineering students who completed their ENG4702 Final Year Engineering Project "A new device to re-open blocked arteries post-angioplasty" in the Unit. Ethan Prabakaran was our successful Summer Scholarship student this year completing an outstanding final presentation and gaining authorship on the Unit's latest manuscript.

The Unit continues to contribute to EHCS HDR student assessment and aims to foster an environment supportive of academic endeavour at undergraduate and postgraduate levels through a broad range of translational research projects.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A highlight of 2023 included visits to EHCS by both State and Federal Health Ministers, Mary-Anne Thomas and Mark Butler, with ECRU-TRD showcasing and engaging both Ministers in its flagship Lumi-Solve project. This was a great opportunity to emphasise the precincts translational research capabilities and garner support for additional local infrastructure to advance current and future research initiatives.



A/Prof Anthony Dear together with Victorian Health Minister, Mary-Anne Thomas and State Member for Box Hill, Paul Hamer MP. involved in a demonstration of Lumi-Solve during a 2023 visit to EHCS.

World Diabetes Day was held on 14th November, 2023 affording the Unit an opportunity to contribute to enhance public awareness of type 2 diabetes through a number of “meet an expert” media interviews. This year’s theme, “Know your Risk for Type 2 Diabetes,” enabled the Unit to emphasize the contribution of lifestyle factors, particularly obesity, to the development of type 2 diabetes and provide insights into the new “fat-busting”, GLP-1 receptor agonist, anti-obesity drugs currently receiving significant media attention.

USEFUL LINKS

- <https://www.monash.edu/lumi-solve>
- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37165253/>
- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38239554/>
- <https://vimeo.com/896020529> (From 1:09:00 to 1:14:30)
- <https://research.csiro.au/onalumni/lumi-solve/>
- <https://cancertools.org/small-molecules/photo-activated-histone-deacetylase-inhibitor-161586/>
- <https://soundcloud.com/ultra1065fm/world-diabetes-day>

EASTERN HEALTH INTENSIVE CARE RESEARCH (EHICR)

A/PROF GRAEME DUKE

The Eastern Health Intensive Care Research Team continues to facilitate, optimise and support all research-related activity across our three campuses, including ANZICS CTG trials and various local projects. We also continue to collaborate and support clinical trials led with other specialities including the Emergency Department, Infectious Diseases, Neurology, and Cardiology.

We thank all the intensive care team for their ongoing support and assistance running our trials.

KEY CONTACTS

- A/Prof Graeme Duke – graeme.duke@easternhealth.org.au
- Dr Peter Chan – peter.chan@easternhealth.org.au
- Steven Hirth – steven.hirth@easternhealth.org.au
- Nicole Robertson – nicole.robertson@easternhealth.org.au
- Kym Gellie – kym.gellie@easternhealth.org.au

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ICU RESEARCH PROGRAM

TRIALS/LOCAL PROJECTS COMPLETED IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

- **BLENDER** – A randomised controlled trial of liberal vs conservative O₂ therapy during ECMO. Principal investigator: *John Dyett (specialist)*. Box Hill Hospital is the 2nd highest recruiting site.
- **TOM-CAT** – A pilot study of tissue oxygenation using mechanical vs conventional chest compression in adult in-hospital cardiac arrest. Lead investigator: *Cheelim Liew (Nurse Practitioner)*.
- **SEPSIS Alerts** – A retrospective review of Lighthouse sepsis alerts in eMR. Lead investigator: *Eanna Lowney (Advanced ICU trainee)*.
- **Arterial blood gas order EMR workflow** – ICU EMR Special Interest Group.
- **EPIC: Geographic access to Extra-Corporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO) in Victoria** – Demographics of the Victorian ECMO population utilising geographic ‘heat’ and choropleth mapping to quantify access according to socioeconomic status and origin of referral. Lead investigator: *Joanna Chow (ICU Registrar)*, *Julia Hart (ICU Registrar)*, *John Dyett (ICU Consultant)*.

CURRENTLY ENROLLING MULTI-CENTRE TRIALS

- **REMAP-CAP** – An International registry and platform trial of interventions for community acquired pneumonia. Principal Investigator: *Joanne Simpson (ICU Consultant)*.
- **Mega-ROX** – MEGA randomised Registry Trial comparing conservative vs liberal oxygen targets starting in March 2023. *Principal Investigator: Niall Kennedy (ICU Consultant)*.
- **Bone Zone** – A randomised controlled trial, evaluating bone loss prevention with zoledronic acid or denosumab in critically ill adults. Principal Investigator: *Peter Chan (ICU Consultant)*.
- **RAISE** – A double-blind, randomized, placebo-controlled study in conjunction with Neurology Service to evaluate the efficacy and safety of IV ganaxolone in status epilepticus, starting in 2023. Principal investigator: *A/Prof Patrick Carney (Neurology Consultant)*.
- **ARISE** – A multicentre randomised controlled trial in ANZ comparing fluids or vasopressors in sepsis; joint project with Emergency Department. Principal investigator: *Paul Buntine (ED Physician)*.
- **SNAP** – Staphylococcus Aureus Network Adaptive Platform trial. Principal Investigator: *Stephen Guy (ID Physician)*.

INTER/NATIONAL RESEARCH REGISTRIES AND SURVEYS

- **SPRINT-SARI** – Continuous national registry for COVID positive patients. Principal investigator: *Peter Chan (ICU Consultant)*.
- **EXCEL** – Continuous national registry of ECMO delivery and outcomes. Principal investigator: *John Dyett (ICU Consultant)*.
- **ECMOCARD** – Continuous international registry of COVID positive patients needing mechanical ventilation or ECMO for respiratory failure. Lead investigator: *Cheelim Liew (Nurse Practitioner)*.
- **ELSO** – Continuous Extracorporeal Life Support Organization Registry: a comprehensive international data registry of patients receiving ECMO, supporting clinicians and clinical research, and regulatory agencies. *John Dyett (ICU Consultant)*, *Cheelim Liew (Nurse Practitioner)*.
- **ANZICS APD Data** – Continuous detailed de-identified clinical data registry of all ICU admissions submitted weekly. *Steven Hirth (ICU Data Analyst)*, *Graeme Duke (ICU Consultant)*.
- **ANZICS Critical Care Resources report** – Annual audit of clinical activity and clinical resources compared to national benchmarks. *Graeme Duke (ICU Consultant)*, *Steve Hirth (ICU Data Analyst)*, *Di Parker (ICU Consultant)*.
- **ANZICS Point Prevalence Program** – An annual snapshot observational survey of current clinical practice in intensive care focusing on specific therapies not reported elsewhere. Principal Investigator: *Graeme Duke (ICU Consultant)*, *Di Parker (ICU Consultant)*, *Nicole Robertson (ICU Research Nurse)*, *Kym Gellie (ICU Research Nurse)*.
- **RESPIRE** – Respiratory physiotherapy in intensive care: Benchmarking physiotherapy interventions for mechanically ventilated patients in Australian ICUs. *(Monash Health)*.
- **Physiotherapists’ perceptions of their learning experience in the ICU** – A qualitative interview study. *(The University of Melbourne)*.

EASTERN HEALTH (LOCAL) RESEARCH PROJECTS

Clinical decision support for mechanical ventilation – An analysis based on real-time EMR data. Lead investigators: *Steven Hirth (ICU Data Analyst)*, *John Dyett (ICU Consultant)*.

Clinical evaluation of the national hospital acquired complication program – Ongoing audits of ICU, subacute care, acute care, and anaesthesia complications. Principal investigator: *Graeme Duke (ICU Consultant)*.

A retrospective audit of difficult airway complications under anaesthesia – A clinical audit. Lead Investigators: *Courtney Cini (Box Hill Registrar)*, *Tarin Ward (Anaesthetics Research Nurse)*, *Steve Hirth (ICU Data Analyst)*, *Graeme Duke (ICU Consultant)*.

DECODE – An audit of care of the dying patient in ICU. Principal investigators: *Graeme Duke (ICU Consultant)*, *Maria DeFreitas (ICU Registrar)*, *Lucinda Roberts (ICU Registrar)*.

Trainee Assessment and ICU Feedback Process – Lead Investigator: *Philippe LeFevre (ICU Consultant)*, *Steve Hirth (ICU Data Analyst)*.

Audit of clinical documentation in ICU – Admission note, Daily Goals of Care, ANZICS data, Discharge Summary. Lead Investigators: *Graeme Duke (ICU Consultant)*, *Steve Hirth (ICU Data Analyst)*.

Beyond ICU (formerly eHUG) – *IPEG ICU Patient Experience Group*.

Ventilation data in COVID patients – Predictive data to aid clinical decision making – Lead Investigators: *John Dyett (ICU Consultant)*, *Steve Hirth (ICU Data Analyst)*.

ICU nurses’ re-deployment experiences during the COVID -19 pandemic: A qualitative study – Principal Investigator: *Louise White (ICU Nurse)*.

VENT ON – Improving the accuracy and completeness of documentation of ventilation hours in the ICU – Lead Investigators: *Nicole Robertson (ICU Research Nurse)*, *Kym Gellie (ICU Research Nurse)*.

Angliss hospital liaison nurse survey – *Angliss Liaison Nurse Team*.

MET dashboard – Lead Investigator: *Steve Hirth (ICU Data Analyst)*.

Monitoring acute care outcomes: AMI, pneumonia, heart failure, ICU – *Graeme Duke (ICU Consultant)*, *Steve Hirth (ICU Data Analyst)*.

FUTURE TRIALS

- **PRECISE** – PRrecision Ecmo in Cardiogenic Shock Evaluation.
- **EPIC** – Eastern metroPolitan Implementation of a medical ECMO service: the EPIC Quality Improvement Project.
- **ODIN** – An Observational prospective study Detecting limb Ischaemia using NIRS in VA ECMO: The ODIN study.
- **Nutrient 2** – Nutrition provision in critically ill adults.
- **ICU Resolve-D** – Virtual peer support for ICU survivors.
- **Enhancing communication in the ICU** – Exploring the use of bedside communication whiteboards for patient and family engagement.
- **Home AKI** – Haemofiltration with OXiris: Multicentre evaluation in Acute Kidney Injury.
- **Soda-Bic** – SODium BICarbonate for metabolic acidosis in the intensive care unit: A multicentre, randomised, double-blind clinical trial.
- **The INF-ECMO Study** – Nosocomial infection in patients treated with extracorporeal membrane oxygenation.
- **Inspire beyond ICU** – A multicentre randomised controlled trial. Inspiratory muscle training to enhance recovery from mechanical ventilation.

EMERGENCY MEDICINE RESEARCH

A/PROF PAUL BUNTINE

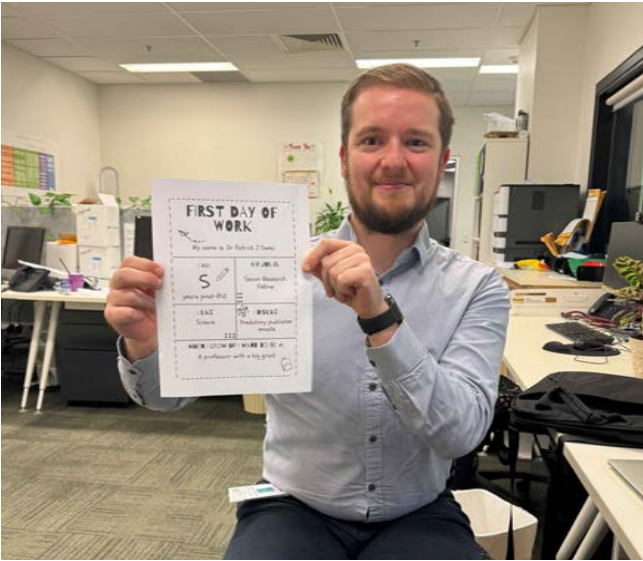
TEAM NEWS

Video: this relates to a project that involved sending an inreach team to residential aged care homes so as to reduce ED transfers in cases where these would have been unhelpful/unnecessary: <https://www.easternhealth.org.au/news-events/emergency-care-in-the-home/>

STUDIES

Ongoing enrolment in ARISE fluids study, comparing early vasopressors with IV fluids in patients with septic shock. Twenty patients enrolled at Eastern Health to date. Project now at halfway point with 500 patients enrolled across Australia and NZ.

Ongoing recruitment for EDNAV study – Emerging Drugs Network of Australia. Over 200 blood samples now collected at EH sites for patients presenting to ED with an altered conscious state in the setting of illicit substance use.



Patrick Owen, our new Senior Research Fellow, recently became an A/Prof!

ABSTRACTS

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Aldridge E, Ball S, Bray J, Perera N, Whiteside A, Finn J. 108 The impact of emotional barriers on callers’ initiation and continuation of CPR: does it vary according to the caller-patient relationship?. Resuscitation. 2023 Nov 1;192:S45.

GRANT SUCCESS

- Monash Health IV cannula project grant (\$59,007 Jun-July 2023; \$159,540 in total).
- Mundell NL, Owen PJ, Buntine P, Considine J. An audit of discharge referral practices to exercise rehabilitation following emergency department presentation. Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition, Deakin University: Seed Grant. 2023. A\$9,039.00
- Tait JL, Owen PJ, Main LC, Mundell NL, Buntine P. Can pain-related cytokines signal the effectiveness of exercise in individuals with low back pain? Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition, Deakin University: Seed Grant. 2023. A\$10,000.00
- Vincent GE, Ferguson SA, Sprajcer M, Crowther ME, Owen PJ, Mundell NL, Tait JL, Tagliaferri SD, Buntine P, Vincent K, Belavy DL. Cognitive function in adults with chronic low back pain: a systematic review and meta-analysis. School of Health, Medical and Applied Sciences, CQUniversity: Summer Research Scholarship. 2023. A\$6,000.00

ENDOCRINOLOGY

PROF CHRIS GILFILLAN

The endocrine unit at Eastern Health and the endocrine group within the ECRU division of the Monash University Eastern Health Clinical School continue to have an active research program and increasing research output with each passing year. Research covers all aspects of endocrinology and metabolism and involves people from all levels of training from student to specialty physician trainees to research fellows and higher degree students and postdoctoral studies. It is an exciting time in endocrinology with the advent of a new generation of treatments for diabetes and other endocrine diseases that promise improved health outcomes for our patients over the next 10 years.

The endocrine service is taking every opportunity to be involved in these developments to the benefit for patients in the eastern suburbs and to enhance training opportunities at the Eastern Health Clinical School.

Details of research projects and published output for 2023 are presented below.

INVESTIGATOR–INITIATED RESEARCH

- A PhD project examining the role of SMAC-mimetics alone and in combination with other agents in the treatment of thyroid cancer in in vitro models. This project is in collaboration with the Hudson Institute.
- A PhD project looking at novel biomarkers of thyroid cancer, including circulating tumour DNA, anti cancer antibodies and circulating tumour cells , in a variety of clinical circumstances.
- The I-First clinical trial of redifferentiation in advanced radio-resistant thyroid cancer. This is a national multicentre trial funded by the MRFF.
- A PhD project examining the impact of the introduction of cloud-based monitoring for patients with gestational diabetes. Impact on the patient experience, the clinician experience and the health economic benefits will be examined in detail.
- A collaboration with the Monash Institute of Medical Engineering and Faculty of IT in developing a device to recognise meals from a photograph and predict individual glycaemic responses, providing a ‘traffic light’ warning to subjects in real-time, with the aim of improving health-related behaviours.
- A post doctoral project looking at the mRNA expression profile in muscle biopsy specimens from women presenting with hip fracture versus controls. Combined with previous data on histology and protein expression, we hope to see a muscle phenotype in these patients.
- A collaboration with the Monash Medical Centre and the Alfred to examine the relationship between hyperparathyroidism and qualifying criteria for primary aldosteronism screening. This paper is under review.
- An Advanced trainee project auditing adrenal incidentalomas and their evaluation at Eastern Health. This paper is under review.

SPONSORED CLINICAL RESEARCH

- Lilly GZBM – A phase 3, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study to investigate the efficacy and safety of retatrutide once weekly compared to placebo in participants with severe obesity with established cardiovascular disease.
- Lilly GZGQ – A phase 3, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study to investigate the efficacy and safety of once daily orforglipron compared to placebo in participants with obesity or overweight and T2DM.
- Lilly GZBK – A phase 3, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study to investigate the efficacy and safety of retatrutide once weekly compared to placebo in participants with T2DM obesity and overweight + sub study sleep apnoea.
- Lilly GPIJ – A Phase 3, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study to investigate the effect of tirzepatide on the reduction of morbidity and mortality in adults with obesity.
- Forsight TCH-306 – A multicenter, randomized, parallel-arm, placebo-controlled (double-blind), active controlled (open-label) trial to compare the efficacy and safety of once-weekly lonapegsomatropin with placebo and a daily somatropin product in adults with growth hormone deficiency.
- Novovax_2019nCov-311 – A phase 3, randomized, observer blinded study to evaluate the safety and immunogenicity of two booster doses of the NVX-CoV2525 vaccine in adults previously vaccinated with other COVID-19 vaccines.
- Lilly GPGN – Effects of tirzepatide 15mg versus dulaglutide on major cardiovascular events (Revised CVOT Tirzepatide GPGN).
- Boehringer-Ingelheim Synergize 1 and 2 – Dual GLP-1 and glucagon agonist in obese diabetic and non-diabetic subjects.
- Novo Nordisk NNC0519-0130 vs Tirzepatide in type 2 diabetes.
- Endogenex pivotal ReCet trial examining the role of duodenal mucosal ablation and resetting in improving metabolic parameters in patients with diabetes.
- Amolyt Calypso Trial of pTH receptor agonist in the management of hypoparathyroidism.
- Arrowhead Pharma – Novel treatment of hypertriglyceridemia.



GASTROENTEROLOGY

DR ROHIT SAWHNEY

The Department of Gastroenterology has had a successful research year and has remained actively involved in a range of clinical and translational research throughout 2023. The unit was under the directorship of Professor Amanda Nicoll for the first half of the year and subsequently under Dr Rohit Sawhney while Amanda was on long service leave. One of our clinician researchers, Alex Hodge, became an Adjunct Clinical Associate Professor this year in recognition of his years of dedication to teaching and research activities. Additional senior researcher clinicians include Dr Stephen Bloom and Dr Abhinav Vasudevan. Our research team also includes study coordinators led by Ms Emma Dimitri and assisted by Ms Sasha Trantino and Ms Adele O'Brien.

The department has one PhD student currently, Dr Anuj Bohra, who has submitted his thesis on enhancing disease assessment modalities in Crohn's disease.

The IBD clinical / research fellowship position is continuing with a focus on up-skilling gastroenterology trainees in the management of inflammatory bowel disease and combines clinical duties with research and education. Similarly, the Hepatology fellowship continues to support research and further clinical experience in hepatocellular carcinoma, metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease, drug-induced liver injury and improving the management of cirrhosis.

The Unit continues to be active with investigator-initiated studies in fields of inflammatory bowel disease including through the ANZIBD consortium (AURORA, PROACTIVE, ANZASUC), hepatocellular cancer (pro-FAITH), autoimmune/cholestatic liver disease (PROSPER), viral hepatitis, drug induced liver injury, and cirrhosis and portal hypertension, enabled by valuable collaborations with other departments at Eastern Health (including haematology, psychiatry and pharmacy) as well as colleagues in Victoria, interstate and overseas.

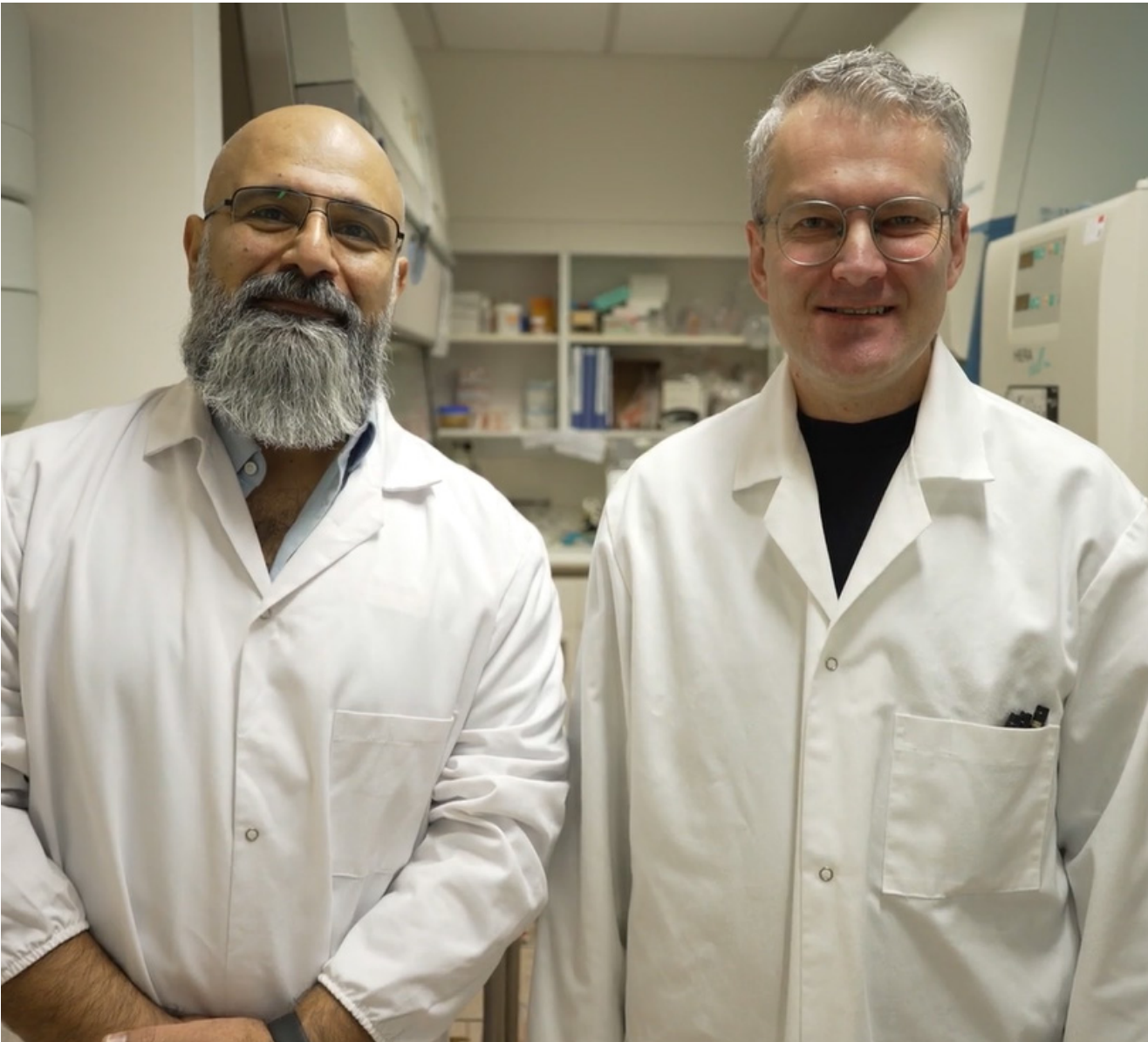
There are many pharmaceutical trials our unit is involved in to further improve the available treatments for inflammatory bowel disease, coeliac disease, eosinophilic oesophagitis, hepatocellular cancer, alcoholic hepatitis, cirrhosis and portal hypertension.

Numerous publications have been achieved in the last year by researchers in our group on varied topics including therapies and outcomes in IBD, the role of imaging in inflammatory bowel disease, hepatitis C, as well as treatment and outcomes of hepatocellular cancer. We have presented our research at local and international meetings.

HAEMATOLOGY

A/PROF STEPHEN TING

In 2023, the Haematology Department continued to provide a wide range of clinical trials for all malignant haematology diseases inclusive of myelodysplasia, acute leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma, amyloidosis, polycythemia vera, myelofibrosis and non-malignant diseases inclusive of severe aplastic anaemia, autoimmune cytopenias, and cancer-associated thrombosis. In this process, we welcomed new disease leads in myeloma and amyloidosis, which in combination with increasing new trials and patient recruitment resulted in continued expansion of the haematology trial coordinators' team. The breadth of clinical translational research is reflected by the department's 2023 publications.



INFECTIOUS DISEASES

DR STEPHEN GUY

The Infectious Diseases Unit's education and research activity has continued to expand in 2023. The unit actively participates in teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, enabling student exposure beyond ID to include Infection Prevention, Antimicrobial Stewardship and Microbiology learning. The unit strives to provide excellent clinical care for patients with infections, and to this end has now embedded research activity in this care.

Infectious Diseases research is largely clinically based and investigator-initiated. These types of projects align with our core aim of provision of excellent infectious diseases care. Potential participants are often approached for inclusion whilst under the direct care of other Eastern Health teams, enabling collaboration in the clinical and research activities. The Infectious Diseases Unit published 7 papers in 2023.

The most notable study underway is SNAP – the Staphylococcus aureus network adaptive platform trial. Eastern joined this investigator-initiated trial in 2023 and is recruiting strongly. This trial is set to inform management of S aureus bloodstream (SAB) infections globally. The study seeks to identify which are the best definitive antibiotics for SAB (depending on the sensitivity profile of the isolate), whether adjunctive lincosamide therapy improves outcomes, and whether intravenous therapy can be switched to oral therapy at earlier timepoints safely.

Other projects the unit is involved with include COVID-19 related projects, especially in the field of COVID-19 in the immunocompromised host, and participation in collaborative registry work supporting optimal care for people living with HIV.

Antimicrobial stewardship projects include the national Antibiotic Allergy network project, as well as other projects assessing more local prescribing.

Several further research projects are in development, and inherent in their nature is collaboration between Infections Diseases and several other departments, most often Microbiology.

The Unit's contribution to COVID-19 research (at the same time as managing the huge clinical workload associated with the pandemic) is notable for 3 major publications, 2 of which were in the journal NEJM Evidence (2023 & 2023).

POSTERS & ABSTRACTS

Ling Z, Liu R, Guy S, Fong C. A retrospective analysis of COVID-19 patients with autoimmune rheumatic diseases in a major Australian hospital. Australian Rheumatology Association annual meeting, 2023, and Eastern Health Research Week, 2023.

CURRENT ACTIVE RESEARCH PROJECTS (PROJECTS LISTED WITH EASTERN HEALTH ETHICS):

- Staphylococcus Aureus Network Adaptive Trial (SNAP): SSA/74098/EH-2023-354211.
- HIV clinical quality registry: HREC/85311/Alfred-2023-381200.
- Dynamics of SARS-CoV-2 infection in immunocompromised patients – natural history and outcomes following antiviral therapy: HREC/88822/MH-2023-354992.
- Remdesivir therapy for COVID-19: The Australian Experience: SSA/73176/EH-2022-332316.
- National Antibiotic Allergy network: SSA/78719/EH-2023-381146.
- Australasian COVID-19 Trial (ASCOT): SSA/62646/EH-2020-211319.
- Knowledge and attitudes of general medicine prescribers for CAP: Project ID 97679.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM (MHWP)

A/PROF JUDY HOPE

Research and Evaluation is critical to understanding and improving the experiences, processes and outcomes of the consumers, carers, supporting professionals, stakeholders and staff of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Program. The recent Royal Commission into Mental Health in Victoria has highlighted the critical need to stop innovating without evaluating. The Eastern Health Mental Health & Wellbeing Program Research, Evaluation & Development (EMRLD) Unit excels at pragmatic, sound and respectful research and evaluation approaches.

Our vision is of a future where the MHWBP automatically incorporates respectful evaluation into all service delivery and development. The MHWBP actively contributes to the ongoing assembly of knowledge about tertiary mental health services, and partners with those with lived experience and professional experience to systematise and share their investigations and their findings.

KEY STAFF

- Dr Peter Brann: Co-director CYMHS Research and Evaluation
- Dr Helen Mildred: Co-director iCYMHS Research and Evaluation
- Dr Hema Jayaram: Director Older Persons MH Research and Evaluation
- Dr Stan Innes: Research Associate
- Ms Bronwyn Sanders: Research Assistant

The program is lucky to have a blossoming research program in mental health and wellbeing, with many key clinical and lived experience collaborators.

INVESTIGATOR-INITIATED STUDIES

HOPE: An investigation of the characteristics and effectiveness of a post-suicide engagement program.

ICA sensory project: An evaluation of the effect of transformation of psychiatric intensive care units on staff and patient experience.

ECG project: Evaluating the equivalence of limb lead ECG use.

MOSAIC study: Examining the impact of practitioner education on prescribing practices in early schizophrenia.

MULTICENTRE COLLABORATIVE STUDIES

CADET: An investigation of the use of candesartan in depression. Deakin University, IMPACT group.

SCHOLARLY PROJECTS

The MHWP has over 10 scholarly projects underway in 2023, with diverse topics such as: experiences of care in emergency departments; electroconvulsive therapies in special populations; and case complexity in iCYMHS.

STUDENTS

Seven medical students were hosted by the program across the year, engaged in our key investigator-initiated studies.

PUBLICATIONS

The MHWP published the highest ever number of annual publications in 2023: 26 original peer-reviewed articles and 11 conference papers. Particular congratulations to our Collaborative Recovery Model team, who published their paper on the impact of co-facilitated CRM training:

Williamson PE, Hope J, Dixon C, Oades LG. Impact of Cofacilitated, Collaborative, Recovery-Oriented Practice Training on Clinical Mental Health Workforce Competencies. Psychiatric Services. 2023 Apr 25:appips202100619.

ANNUAL FORUM

The Mental Health Research Forum celebrates research work done across all mental health services. The 2023 Forum was conducted in-person in October 2023, and featured 6 presenters from mental health and pharmacy. The Forum was attended by over 100 participants.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Fifteen staff presented at 4 conferences throughout the year, including the RANZCP Congress. Particular congratulations go to our national and international speakers:

- Janice Chisholm, who presented at the International Conference in Practice in Social Work in Denmark.
- Freya Miller, Julie Rickard, Michele Orr, who presented at the Suicide Prevention Australia National Conference

PRESENTATIONS

- **Judith Hope.** Longitudinal naturalistic mixed methods followup study of private psychiatric hospital inpatients who present with suicidal ideation. RANZCP Annual Congress 2023.
- **Judith Hope.** Efficacy of a 90-day intensive post-suicide engagement program. RANZCP Annual Congress 2023.
- Keks N.A., **Hope J.** & Copolov D.L. The association between long-term use of prolactin elevating antipsychotics in women and risk of breast cancer: what are the clinical implications? RANZCP Annual Congress 2023
- **Katelyn Tadd.** Neuroimaging in the acute psychiatric setting: associations with neuropsychiatric risk factors. RANZCP Annual Congress 2023.
- Penny Golding, **Tatiana Catanchin**, Katherine James, Katharine McAlpine. Broken pipelines and training bottlenecks: new opportunities for training equity.
- **Yoshi Bandara**, Anusha Jayasekera, Evelyn Bian, **Eishi Bandara**, **Max Marrows**. What the Zuck? Social media, psychiatry and the merits and costs of increasing connectedness.
- **Virginia Loftus.** Bluey's lessons for child psychiatrists and parents.
- **Euan Donly.** Supports and barriers to implementing screening tools in public hospital emergency departments. Poster presentation at EH Research Forum.
- **Starke J.** The path opens: psychedelic assisted therapy in the Australian context. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry RANZCP Annual Congress 2023.
- **Starke J.**, Liknaitzky P., Carraro V. & Zubaran C. Minding the shop: the prospect of regulated use of psychedelic substances in Australia. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry RANZCP Annual Congress 2023.
- Jillian H Broadbear, Sathya Rao, Cathryn Pilcher and **Hemalatha Jayaram**. Community-based model of care for people with personality disorder. ISSPD Congress 2023.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN PRACTICE IN SOCIAL WORK, DENMARK

- **Jaz Chisholm.** Peer workers and clinicians perspective about ROP in a public mental health setting.

SUICIDE PREVENTION AUSTRALIA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

- **Freya Miller**, Julie Rickard, **Michele Orr**. Promoting hope and connection in life – benchmarking the shared vision.

NEPHROLOGY

PROF LAWRENCE MCMAHON

INVESTIGATOR-INITIATED STUDIES

Our Investigator-initiated studies of muscle mass in over 170 people with chronic kidney disease have continued in 2023 with follow-up visits and analysis of some stored samples. Dr Limy Wong continues this clinical research and is working on cell culture studies to explore this further. With Dr Jenny Ooi and Mr Simon Tsang, we have cultured primary osteoblast (Figure) and skeletal muscle myoblast cell lines separately and in co-cultures. We are performing molecular experiments to measure differentiation, proliferation and cell viability in response to the presence of uraemic toxins with the aim of better understanding cellular cross-talk and the role of mediators such as FGF23.

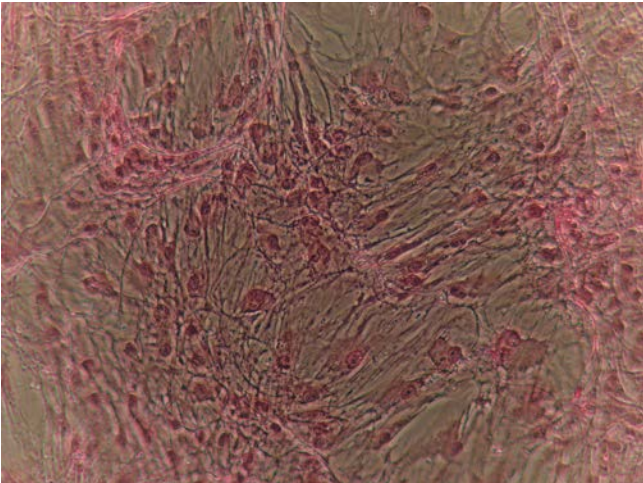
Dr Louis Huang’s randomised controlled trial, in collaboration with Austin Health and Monash Health, of an incremental start to peritoneal dialysis, is nearing the end of follow up and we expect to report results in 2024.

Dr Kathryn Ducharlet’s “Your future, your health” study that focuses on future treatment decision making identify end-of-life care preferences in patients aged 70 years and above with an estimated Glomerular Filtration Rate (eGFR) <20mL/min is also complete and results are being analysed.

PhD STUDENTS

Dr Aruni Malaweera commenced a PhD in our Department in 2022 supervised by Prof McMahon and Dr Huang to study the effects of different peritoneal dialysis fluids on the gut, and different uraemic toxins.

An additional two PhD students are expected to commence studies towards the middle of the year.



PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL COMMITTEES

Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology:
Dr Kathryn Ducharlet – Co-Chair Kidney Supportive Care Special Interest Group.

Australasian Kidney Trials Network: A/Prof Matthew Roberts – Chair, Scientific Committee. Dr Louis Huang – Chair, Peritoneal Dialysis Work Group.

Australian and New Zealand Dialysis and Transplant Registry:
A/Prof Matthew Roberts – Chair, Haemodialysis Work Group.
A/Prof Darren Lee – Member, Transplant Work Group.

INDUSTRY-SPONSORED CLINICAL TRIALS

We are currently recruiting participants for the following industry-sponsored clinical trials:

- A Phase 3, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study of atrasentan in patients with IgA nephropathy at risk of progressive loss of renal function (The ALIGN Study)
- A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, parallel-group, multicenter phase 3 study to investigate the efficacy and safety of Finerenone, in addition to standard of care, on the progression of kidney disease in patients with Non-Diabetic Chronic Kidney Disease (FIND-CKD).
- Incidence of de novo HLA Antibody formation after Transfusion with blood products in patients with and without chronic kidney disease: A prospective observational study (HAbIT Part 2).

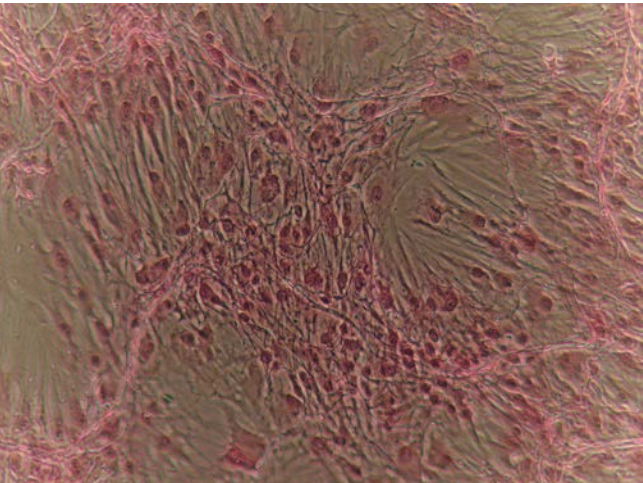


Figure: Differentiated primary osteoblasts stained with Sirius Red, light microscopy 10X magnification.

COLLABORATIVE CLINICAL TRIALS

We commenced in 2023 as a site for the Symptom Monitoring with Feedback Trial (SWIFT) that is a cluster randomised trial of the effect of regularly collecting patient-reported symptoms from people on haemodialysis in our facilities and feeding these back to the responsible nephrologist compared to standard care. Dr Kathryn Ducharlet is the Principal Investigator for our site.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

SPEAKER: ABSTRACT PRESENTATION

Wong L. Molecular Mechanisms Underpinning Muscle Atrophy in Chronic Kidney Disease. World Congress of Nephrology, Bangkok, 30 March-2 April 2023.

Ducharlet K. Variation in symptom management approaches in advanced kidney disease. World Congress of Nephrology, Bangkok, 30 March-2 April 2023.

Ducharlet K. Kidney supportive care: a survey of activity and practice patterns across Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. World Congress of Nephrology, Bangkok, 30 March-2 April 2023.

Ducharlet K. Understanding why patients with advanced kidney disease are not ready to engage in advance care planning. Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology, Christchurch, 4-6 September 2023.

Malaweera A. The effect of intravenous iron sucrose on FGF23 in a group of haemodialysis patients. Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology, Christchurch, 4-6 September, 2023.

Ducharlet K. Understanding patient engagement in advance care planning. American Society of Nephrology Annual Scientific Meeting, Philadelphia, 2-5 November 2023.

Roberts MA. Outcomes of patients with chronic kidney disease and dialysis dependence post hip fracture. Eastern Health Research Forum, 29 November 2023.

Roberts MA. Greater hemodialysis exposure (“quotidian hemodialysis”) has different mortality associations by patient age group: a registry cohort study. Eastern Health Research Forum, 29 November 2023.

Malaweera A. FGF23 and anaemia. Eastern Health Research Forum, 29 November 2023.

Lee D. Increased early mortality risk following kidney transplant failure in Australia and New Zealand (1980-2019). Transplant Society of Australia and New Zealand Annual Scientific Meeting, Brisbane, 17-20 June 2023.

NEUROSCIENCES

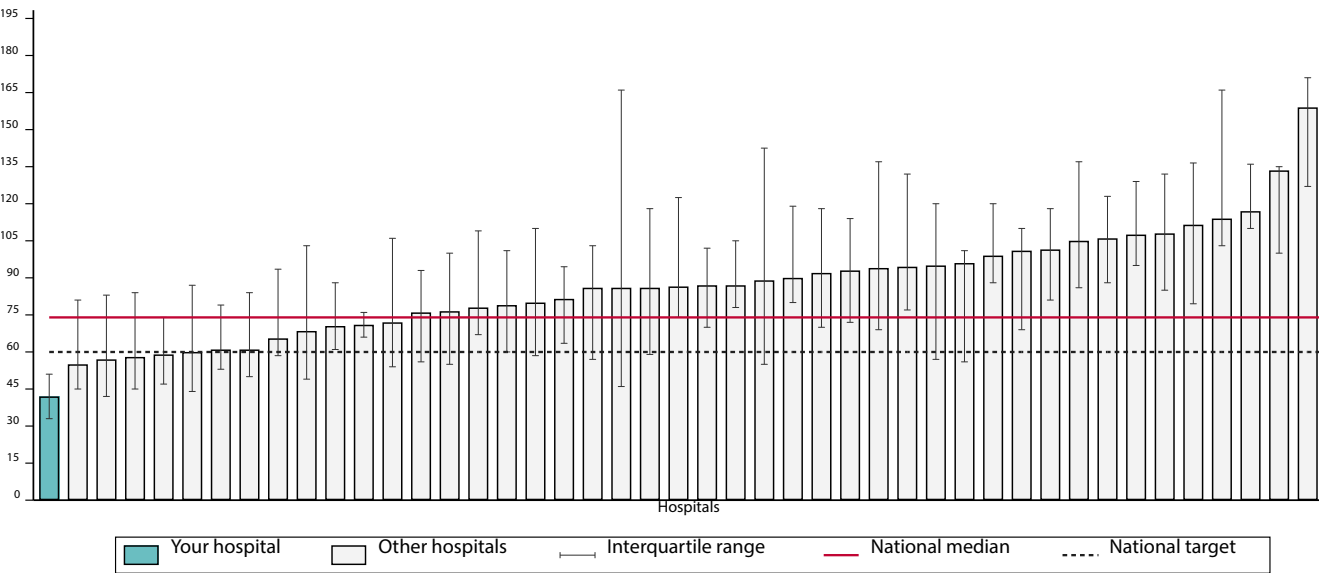
PROF HELEN DEWEY

STROKE

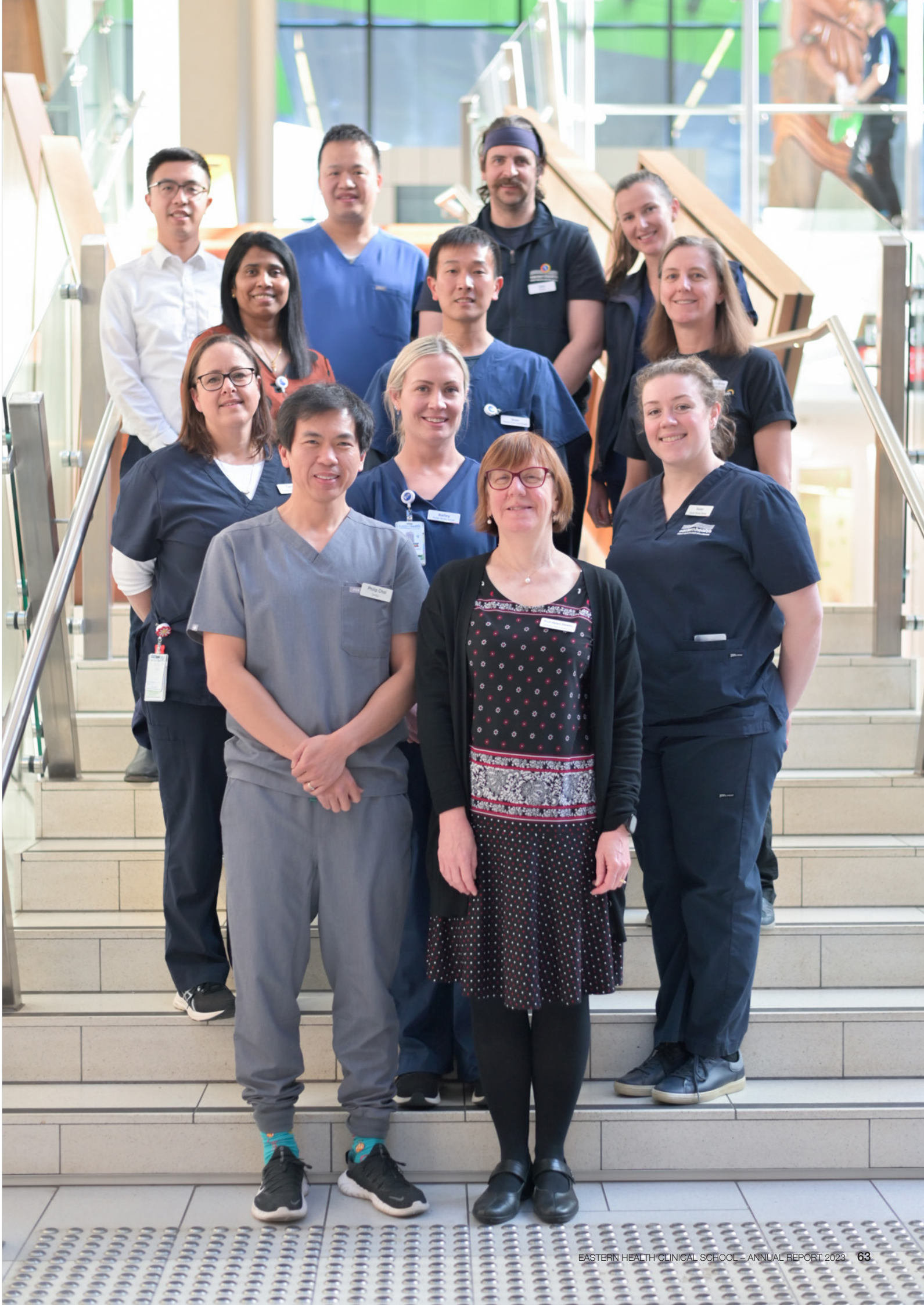
The Stroke team at Box Hill was again recognised by the Australian Stroke Clinical Registry in 2023 for having the fastest median Door-to-Needle time for stroke thrombolysis in Australia in 2022. Our median was 42 mins, with the runner up hospital with a median of over 50 mins and Australian national median at 74 mins. We have been a national leader in this field since 2020.

The Stroke Trials Unit at ECRU, supported by members of the stroke team, together have enrolled 110 acute stroke patients into clinical studies. This represents about 1 in 6 of all stroke patients admitted to the Box Hill Hospital Stroke Unit being enrolled into trials. The Stroke Unit at Box Hill Hospital also received certification as a Primary Stroke Centre for 4 years from 2023. This is a pilot program by the Australian Stroke Coalition to improve stroke care standards across Australia by way of certification.

Bridging the Urban and Regional Divide in Stroke (BUILDS), a Tele-Stroke Unit model that supports regional hospitals to provide stroke unit care to their patients, was selected as a finalist in the Victorian Public Healthcare Award 2023. The original 12 month pilot at Echuca in 2021 was supported by an Avant Foundation grant. The program in Echuca has now transitioned to routine clinical practice. BUILDS has expanded to Sale, and North West Regional Hospitals in Tasmania in November 2023 with the generous philanthropic support from John and Margaret Bland via the Eastern Health Foundation.



Door-to-needle times for various institutions; Box Hill Hospital shown in blue



MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND NEUROIMMUNOLOGY (MSNI) UNIT

2023 provided the Multiple Sclerosis and Neuroimmunology (MSNI) Unit an abundance of active clinical and translational research under the leadership of Dr Katherine Buzzard and the research team Amanda Fiora, Carly Shaddick and Sandy San Jose.

The MSNI unit continues to conduct multiple pharmaceutical sponsored studies in Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and other non-MS neuroimmunological disease, including many investigator-initiated studies such as:

- FENTrepid – A phase III, double blind, double dummy study to evaluate efficacy & safety of fenebrutinib (a BTK inhibitor) in adults with PPMS.
- Lemtrada OBS13434 – An observational study of participants who received Lemtrada (alemtuzumab) (10 year follow-up).
- Kesimpta MSGO portal / EAFToS – A secondary use of data study characterising Kesimpta (ofatumumab) onboarding and utilization in RRMS patients using MSGO, with a noninterventional primary use of data sub-study comparing patient-reported outcomes to clinical outcomes.
- METEOROID WN43194 – A phase III, randomized, double blind study using satralizumab as a monotherapy or in addition to baseline therapy in Myelin Oligodendrocyte Glycoprotein Antibody-Associated Disease (MOGAD).
- ACTIVE MS – Active participatory health monitoring in people with MS. Patient self-monitoring at home using smartphone apps.
- CLOBAS – Cladribine Long-term efficacy Biomarker Australian Study Phase IV. Primary objective to monitor outcomes of RRMS patients on cladribine over 6 years.
- MS REACTOR – Prospective clinic and home-based serial monitoring of cognition in RRMS.
- MSBase – An international registry dedicated to evaluating outcomes data in multiple sclerosis.
- Crystal Ball – Predicting biomarkers in multiple sclerosis.
- MGBase – An international registry evaluating outcomes data for patients with myasthenia gravis.

- Autoimmune Encephalitis and other Neuroinflammatory Conditions – Both a prospective and retrospective study identifying biomarkers (immune signatures, imaging and EEG correlates) and cognitive outcomes in patients with AE and other neuroinflammatory conditions.

2023 also saw the completion of many long-term studies within the unit, including:

- Nova Extension – A randomized, open label rater blinded study of the efficacy, safety & tolerability of 6 week extended interval dosing of Tysabri (natalizumab) in RRMS patients (Part 1). OLE (Part 2) with subcutaneous and intravenous Tysabri.
- Ensemble – An open label, single arm study to evaluate the effectiveness & safety of ocrelizumab in early RRMS patients.
- TOP – Tysabri observational study – A safety & efficacy registry (10 year follow-up).
- IMPROVE MS – A 6 centre study using iPad tools in the clinic setting to identify sub-clinical disease progression in MS.
- Gilenya Pregnancy Registry (National coordinating site).
- WN42636 Luminesce – A phase III, randomized, double blind placebo-controlled study using satralizumab in generalized myasthenia gravis.

Dr Katherine Buzzard was one of the successful chief investigators on an MRFF grant worth \$1.7m to investigate the use of IVIG in Australia (VALUE-Ig study). This grant will use the MGBase registry to investigate the use of IVIG in myasthenia gravis in Australia to commence in 2024.

With the completion of many long-term studies, comes an expanding capacity for the commencement and ongoing commitment to myasthenia gravis research heading into 2024/2025. This promises to be an exciting year for MSNI research.

DEMENTIA (COGNITIVE NEUROLOGY)

CLINICAL TRIALS

INDUSTRY

The ECDC with the Eastern Clinical Research Unit is one of the most active dementia clinical trials groups in Australia. We have many trials currently recruiting people with mild-moderate Alzheimer’s disease (AD) as well as prodromal AD (also called MCI), and sporadic and genetic frontotemporal dementia (FTD). The first DMT for AD may be approved this year, and we are actively developing pathways to implement this therapy for Eastern Health patients. This is a matter of great urgency for Australian dementia stakeholders.

We continue to contribute to clinical pharma trials in Australasia, with 2 FTD and 6 AD studies in active recruitment.

INVESTIGATOR-LED

NAVAIDD

In 2022, we received a Victorian Medical Research Acceleration Fund for our project on ***A blood test for dementia?*** looking at the utility of blood (neurofilament light chain, NfL) and digital (voice acoustic analyses) biomarkers in dementia diagnosis. We had initially received funding from the EHMRF in 2020 when Prof Brodtmann was awarded the Pam and Alfred Lavey Research and Innovation Grant and further supported by a NHMRC award. This project, now called ***NfL And Voice Acoustic analysis In Dementia Diagnosis (NAVAIDD)*** also includes the capacity for genetic storage and testing, putting us on par with international efforts. We have recruited 330 of the needed 1000 participants to date.

MACA

A/Prof David Darby was successful in a 2022 Eastern Health Foundation grant for a project developing a new cognitive assessment tool for dementia. After a year of development, this is now under HREC review for piloting at Eastern Cognitive Disorders Clinic and Cognitive and Dementia Memory Service.

Post-diagnostic support for young-onset dementia

In 2023, cognitive nurse consultant Janet Bennett and social worker Constance Schneider received an Eastern Health Foundation grant to examine the experience of people with young onset dementia and their loved ones after the diagnosis. This has been presented at 2023 Australian Gerontology Conference and will be presented at the 2024 International Dementia Conference. A new pilot implementation study is planned for submission in 2024.

TRAINING

We had two Cognitive Neurology Fellows in 2023: Dr Natasha Krishnadas and Dr Karen Robinson. Dr Krishnadas is commencing clinical post-doctoral research and will return to work with us on clinical trials in July 2024. Dr Robinson is establishing a dementia service at Barwon Health and at the Epworth group. A cognitive alumnus, Dr Maja Christensen, returned as a cognitive neurologist in 2023 and commenced her PhD on AI in dementia diagnosis, currently submitted for ethics review at EH.

AWARDS

Professor Brodtmann was the lead Chief Investigator on 2023-2027 NHMRC 2021 MRFF Early to Mid-Career Researchers \$1,589,171.41 Better biomarkers for dementia diagnosis: NfL and Voice Acoustic analysis In Dementia Diagnosis (NAVAIDD). This round had a 6% success rate, making it one of the most competitive rounds on record!

EPILEPSY

The Eastern Health epilepsy team continues to pursue opportunities to collaborate with colleagues to develop novel epilepsy research projects, as well as partnering with key opinion leaders to conduct investigator-initiated research. Key highlights include:

- Final approvals are in place to enable commencement of recruitment for the Personalised Selection of Medication for Newly Diagnosed Adult Epilepsy (PERSONAL) trial. This unique study, developed by Prof Patrick Kwan will look at the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in optimising medication selection for patients with a new diagnosis of epilepsy. Recruitment has commenced at the lead site at the Alfred Hospital and will roll out at EH in the coming months.
- A/Prof Carney is a CI on a national collaborative research study of the use of sodium selenite as an anti-epileptic therapy with potential disease-modifying activity. The SELECT trial is the first ever trial of a disease-modifying treatment for epilepsy and reflects a paradigm shift in the way we approach epilepsy care. Approvals are now in place to commence recruitment for this study.

- The EH epilepsy team are taking a leading role in large, novel linkage study looking at outcomes for patients with a first ever seizure. A/Prof Carney and Dr Moksh Sethi are currently involved in the first phase, which involves a validation study of an operational definition for first seizures via hospital coding data. Following this, a state-wide linkage study will be performed providing vital insight into outcomes in this prevalent patient group.
- We continue to give strong support for the Australian Epilepsy Project, a world-leading study of advanced diagnostic and classification techniques in epilepsy, funded by the MRFF. A/Prof Carney is on the steering committee of this project and EH remains one of the major recruiting sites.
- We continue to be engaged in research into new investigational agents in conjunction with the Eastern Clinical Research Unit (ECRU) and the Australian Epilepsy Clinical Trials Network (AECTN). The team has completed two pharma-sponsored studies this year, including an outpatient study on a new investigational agent in patients with medication-refractory epilepsy (the RENAISSANCE study is an inpatient study in collaboration with the ICU on the treatment of medication refractory status epilepticus (the MARINUS study).
- A/Prof Carney was promoted to Adjunct Clinical Associate Professor EHCS Research, Eastern Health Clinical School, Monash University Faculty of Medicine Nursing and Health Sciences.

ONCOLOGY

PROF PHILIP PARENTE

The Oncology unit continues to maintain a broad-based research program involving clinical trials as well as basic and translational research. Oncology accounts for the majority of ECRU clinical trials, with 100 active clinical trials in 2023. Our unit's trial activity mainly centres on genitourinary, lung, melanoma, breast, and gastrointestinal cancers. We actively collaborate with multiple groups and have several ongoing basic and translational research projects, as described below.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

- Victoria Atkinson, Benjamin Brady, Geoffrey Peters, Mary Azer, Rachel Roberts-Thomson, Andrew Mant, Melissa Eastgate, Olga Bakharevski, Laura McDonald, Bryan Bennett, Phillip Parente. Real-world outcomes and health-related quality of life in patients with melanoma in Australia receiving adjuvant nivolumab.
- Ian Davis. Asia-Pacific (APAC) Advanced Prostate Cancer Consensus Satellite Symposium, Singapore (convenor), 5 July 2023.
- Ian Davis. ENZARAD and ENZAMET. Pan-Prostate Cancer Group meeting, Madrid, Spain (virtual), 21 April 2023.
- Ian Davis. Novel therapies. PCFA Prostate Cancer Support Nurse series, Australia (virtual) (keynote speaker), 19 September 2023.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

- Benjamin Rao, Kumaran Manivannan, Phillip Parente, Rachel Wong. Carboplatin dosing – Impact of the eviQ ADDIKD Guidelines. Clinical Oncology Society Australia (COSA) 2023.
- Dennett AM,, Parente P et al. Development and evaluation of an allied health Cancer Rehabilitation training package. International Conference for Physiotherapists in Oncology (2023).
- Lucy Porter, Phillip Parente et al. Retrospective audit of clinicopathological features and treatment in early-stage NSCLC – A real-world analysis of patient atezolizumab eligibility. Medical Oncology Group of Australia (MOGA) 2023.
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RESPIRATORY AND SLEEP MEDICINE

PROF FRANK THIEN

In 2023 we have continued our clinical trial and investigator-initiated research, maintaining a strong and diverse research profile. This includes investigator-initiated studies of long term follow-up of thunderstorm asthma, allergen immunotherapy in thunderstorm asthma and eosinophilic exacerbations of COPD, as well as focused activities in the areas of sleep medicine, and in allergy/immunology.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL REGISTRIES

- AUSCAR – **A**Ustralasian registry of Severe **C**utaneous **A**dverse **R**eactions records patients with a history of allergy or have experienced a severe drug reaction to study how to best manage, diagnose and prevent severe adverse drug reactions.
- AILDR – The **A**ustralasian **I**nterstitial **L**ung **D**isease **R**egistry: A bi-national database established since 2016, incorporating prospective epidemiological and investigational data at centres across Australasia of ILD patients to better understand the nature of ILD and assist in developing future clinical research. Eastern Health is the 4th-highest contributor to the registry of 18 centres nationally.
- ASAR – The **A**ustralasian **S**evere **A**sthma **R**egistry records and follows patients with a diagnosis of severe asthma with respect to clinical history, treatments and outcomes.
- ABenRA – This subset of ASAR follows the clinical course and outcomes of patients who have been prescribed the anti-IL5 receptor monoclonal antibody, benralizumab.

CLINICAL TRIALS

We continued to be active in clinical trials recruiting in the last 2 years in the following respiratory disease areas:

IDIOPATHIC PULMONARY FIBROSIS

- ENV-IPF-101 – A phase 2, multi-center study evaluating the safety and efficacy of ENV-101 (taladegib) in subjects with Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis (IPF)
- Horizon – A phase 2b randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, repeat-dose, multicenter trial to evaluate the efficacy, safety and tolerability of HZN-825 in subjects with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis.

BRONCHIECTASIS

- ASPEN – A phase 3, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study to assess the efficacy, safety, and tolerability of brensocatib administered once daily for 52 weeks in subjects with non-cystic fibrosis bronchiectasis.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

- GB4431 – A phase IIb, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, multicenter study to evaluate the efficacy and safety of astegolimab in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

ASTHMA

- GSK NIMBLE 206785 – A 52-week, randomised, double-blind, double-dummy, parallel group, multi-centre, non-inferiority study assessing exacerbation rate, additional measures of asthma control and safety in adult and adolescent severe asthmatic participants with an eosinophilic phenotype treated with GSK3511294 compared with mepolizumab or benralizumab.

GRANTS 2023

Effects of chronic non-cancer pain, medications and substance use on sleep. \$26,502 – 2023 EH Grant. Alan Young, Denise O'Driscoll, Rowan Ogeil, Lisa Jarvie.

Clocking on and off: The impact of time-restricted eating on cardio-metabolic outcomes in obstructive sleep apnoea. \$24,950 – 2024 EH Grant. Denise O'Driscoll, Maxine Bonham, Alan Young, Stuart Huddle.

RHEUMATOLOGY

DR CHRISTOPHER FONG

The Rheumatology unit has been involved in ongoing production of guidelines for inflammatory arthritis for Australia.

This living guideline aims to present the best available, current scientific evidence for pharmacological management of the most common forms of Inflammatory Arthritis (IA), namely Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA), Psoriatic Arthritis (PsA) and axial Spondyloarthritis (axial SpA).

The treatment recommendations are developed by an expert panel of Australian rheumatologists, general practitioners and other medical specialists, allied health professionals and people with lived experience of rheumatic disease, so that the most up to date global evidence is applied to the Australian healthcare context.

This is part of the collaboration with:

- Australia and New Zealand Musculoskeletal (ANZMUSC) Clinical Trials Network,
- Australian Rheumatology Association (ARA), and
- Cochrane Musculoskeletal as part of the Targeted Therapies Alliance, led by NPS MedicineWise.

This is published on the internet via MAGIC app and selected articles have been in the Internal Medicine Journal of Australia. This has included perioperative use of biologics and steroids; rationalisation of treatment once disease activity is stable.

We have also been involved with OMERACT (Outcome Measures in Rheumatic Diseases) at an international level in research outcomes on shared decision making with patients so that research results are important to consumers. Shared decision making (SDM) is central to patient-centred care and is at the crossroads between evidence-based medicine and patient-centred care. In the last decade, there has been increasing interest in SDM in rheumatology and an imperative to use SDM to achieve optimal care. The use of consensus-building methods following the OMERACT Filter 2.1 methodology, grounded in a patient-oriented approach, led to strong endorsement of a core domain set for SDM interventions in rheumatology trials. Future research will include the development of a core outcome measurement set to identify instruments to assess these domains in trials of SDM intervention.

We are also involved in two multinational trials for new drug treatments for systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). One is a monoclonal interferon antibody and the other a Toll-Like receptor antibody which are promising treatments for managing difficult lupus that is resistant to standard treatment. SLE is a common disease in our Asian and Indigenous populations at Eastern Health. It has significant complications in young people and can affect multiple organs – the brain, heart, kidneys, lungs, and blood apart from the usual skin and joint manifestation.

We have also collaborated with geriatrics, orthopaedics and presented at the Australian & New Zealand Society for Geriatric Medicine on the utility of perioperative screening tools to predict complications in patients undergoing orthopaedic surgery. Our dedicated Rheumatology registrars have also been involved in audits of giant cell arteritis and presented at the Internal Med Society of Gen Medicine, Australian Rheumatology Association meeting on predictive factors for giant cell arteritis. We have also partnered with Infectious Diseases to review COVID infection and risk of infectious in our patients with rheumatic diseases. This was presented also at the ARA meeting and also at the international APLAR Asian Pacific Leagues Rheumatic Diseases in Vietnam last year. We have also just started a telehealth clinic at Healesville with advanced musculoskeletal physiotherapists running the clinic there and a rheumatologist off-site courtesy of a grant from the Department of Health. We are examining if this model of care will help our regional patients and shortage of rheumatologists to have better outcomes for patients with musculoskeletal pain.

STUDIES

- A phase 2, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled dose-ranging, parallel and adaptive study to evaluate the efficacy and safety of enpatoran in systemic lupus erythematosus and in cutaneous lupus erythematosus (subacute cutaneous lupus erythematosus and/or discoid lupus erythematosus) participants receiving standard of care.
- A multicenter, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, phase 3 study to evaluate the efficacy and safety of BIIB059 in adult participants with active systemic lupus erythematosus receiving background nonbiologic lupus standard of care.

SPECTRUM (SPECTRUM PERSONALITY DISORDER AND COMPLEX TRAUMA SERVICE)

A/PROF JILLIAN BROADBEAR

CONFERENCE AND FORUM PRESENTATIONS

Spectrum presented three symposia at the annual congress of the International Society for the Study of Personality Disorders (ISSPD – Sydney, Nov, 2023). The titles of the symposia were:

- Symposium 1 Title: Systemic responses to crisis-driven behaviours.
- Symposium 2 Title: Community-based model of care for people with personality disorder.
- Symposium 3 Title: Working towards equity of access for people living with BPD.

Spectrum held its annual Spectrum Research Forum in November 2023 (a virtual event).

Keynote speakers: Prof Andrew Chanen and Prof Sharon Lawn.

Many Spectrum staff and research collaborators presented at the forum.

There were a large number of registrants (international), and a record number of attendees (more than 150 people online for the day).

RECENTLY AWARDED FUNDING

- 2022 – A qualitative investigation of service users’ experiences of mentalization-based treatment (Fiona Donald, Julian Nesci) Eastern Health Foundation (\$23,400).
- 2023 – Sleep and BPD. Michael Bhagwandas, Jillian Broadbear, Rowan Ogeil (\$18,030).

Major project for 2024: Trial of MDMA as an adjunct to psychotherapy for PTSD in people with co-occurring BPD.

SURGICAL PROGRAM

PROF SHOMIK SENGUPTA

The Eastern Health surgical and anaesthetic units continued to be very productive in research through 2023. Many of the units were involved in collaborative multi-centre clinical trials and data collection. In addition, an impressive number of local research projects were developed and completed, often led by junior medical staff. An increasing number of senior medical staff were involved in academic collaborations, representing Eastern Health at national or international conferences and in guideline development. Some units had students undertaking higher research degrees through EHCS. Selected highlights are presented below for each unit.

BREAST/ENDOCRINE

Justin James continued his PhD project on “A model to select early breast cancers where sentinel node biopsy is not necessary”. The unit also contributes to collaborative research through the “ANZ targeted axillary dissection registry” and the POSNOC trial, in addition to a number of other active local projects:

- Implementation of intraoperative quick PTH monitoring during parathyroid surgery.
- Meta-analysis of existing preoperative clinical models to predict sentinel node status in operable breast cancers.
- Meta-analysis of existing preoperative radiomics-based models to predict sentinel node status in operable breast cancers.
- Trial of ICG as an alternative to radionuclide lymphoscintigraphy in sentinel node biopsies in early breast cancers.
- A model to select early breast cancers where sentinel node biopsy may be avoided.
- Implementing a quality assurance and research database for the breast and endocrine surgery unit.

ENT

The ENT unit has increased its academic involvement with Shiva Subramaniam enrolled in a PhD and a number of surgeons involved in national and international conferences and publications. Selected highlights:

- Dr Zubair Hasan was on the organising committee for the Artificial Intelligence in Medicine Surgery and Healthcare workshop and the Society for Computational Fluid Dynamics of the Nose & Airway workshop (Brisbane 2023).
- Dr Matthew Magarey was an invited speaker at the World Congress on Thyroid Cancer in London, June 2023 (where he was also awarded a prize for best video presentation for Tracheal Resection for Invasive Thyroid Cancer) and IFHNOS Rome, June 2023.
- Kevin Nguyen was an invited speaker at the RACS ASC in May 2023 in Adelaide in “Advances in ENT Surgery Section” and “Frontiers in Head and Neck Reconstruction”. He was also an invited speaker and session chair at the Australian, New Zealand Head and Neck Cancer Society (ANZHNCS) ASM Hunter Valley, and has been selected as Convenor for the AHZHNCS ASM 2024.

GENERAL SURGERY

Contributions to collaborative research via the VERITAS and TASMAN collaboratives, as well as international collaborations such as the GECKO study from the International Global Health Research Unit in Surgery have been ongoing and borne fruit in the form of impactful publications.

Geoffrey Kohn has continued his involvement with the Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES) and the International Society for Diseases of the Esophagus (ISDE), contributing to the development of international guidelines.

UPPER GI/HPB

Two students were enrolled for Master of Surgery degrees: Shantanu Joglekar was completing his project “Reducing occupational scatter radiation dose exposure at ERCP”, while Janindu Goonawardena continued his project “Predicting patients who would benefit from oesophagectomy following neoadjuvant chemoradiotherapy”. Numerous other projects were ongoing, and the unit continues to be a well-recognised contributor to surgical research.

UROLOGY

Higher Degree students:

- Congratulations to Ghadir Omran and Josh Kealey for completing their Master of Surgery degrees, on “Genital Protectors In Sport: Are They Fit For Purpose?” and “Clinical Registries To Evaluate The Patterns Of Care And Outcomes Of Patients Diagnosed With Upper Tract Urothelial Carcinoma”, respectively.
- Two new students commenced their Master of Surgery enrolment in 2023. Paul Rival is undertaking a project on a “Pilot study of a GP-led management pathway for recurrent UTIs”; and Abram Botros is studying the “Use of a TURBT checklist to improve documentation and risk stratification for NMIBC”.
- Three Higher Degree students continued their research in 2023. Henry Yao, a Urology VMO, is continuing his PhD on “Genitourinary cancer survivorship – management of adverse effects of cancer treatment and improvement of quality of life during cancer survivorship”. Antara Karmakar is undertaking a Master of Surgery on “Are you there?: Longitudinal detection of tumour-derived DNA in blood and urine during management of bladder cancer”, evaluating the mutational panel developed locally at the Uro-Oncology lab within EHCS. Ruth Snider is completing her Master of Surgery developing “A contemporary tailored approach to recurrent urinary tract infections in females”.

SELECTED ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

- Shomik Sengupta was an invited plenary speaker on “Recent practice-changing papers on urothelial cancer” at the USANZ ASM (Feb 2023). He was an invited speaker at on the “Scientific writing workshop” at the Urology Association of Asia Annual Meeting in Dubai (Sept 2023). He was also session chair and an invited speaker at the Societe Internationale d’urologie annual meeting in Istanbul, Turkey (Oct 2023).
- Caroline Dowling was appointed as co-director of the EHCS Medical Student Programs directorate and has very ably continued its development and delivery of high-quality clinical teaching.
- Courtenay West was an invited presenter on “Mesh removal” at the Pelvic Floor Reconstruction workshop and invited chair at the endourology/stone session at the USANZ ASM, Melbourne. She was also an invited presenter on “Robotics in female and reconstructive surgery” at the NZ section meeting of USANZ (March 2023). She has also been a contributor to therapeutic guidelines (in press), for chapters on male and female stress urinary incontinence.
- Teck Sing (Dixon) Woon was elected president of the Australian Chinese Medical Association Victoria (ACMAV). He also had a number of presentations at national and international conferences, including “Outcomes of radical nephrectomy with IVC thrombectomy at an Australian Institution: A 10-year review” at the European Association of Urology ASM, Milan, Italy (March 2023); “Debate: Dynamic sentinel lymph node biopsy should be the standard of care in penile cancer”; and “Work-life balance and research in private practice”, as well as chair of the “Private Urology Practice Workshop” at the USANZ ASM (Feb 2023).

ACADEMIC OUTPUTS

RESEARCH FUNDING

EHCS received \$25.12M in research funding in 2023. This comprised 38 grants: 13 in Category 1; 6 in Category 2; 10 in Category 3; and 9 category not specified.

Funding Category	Funding Subcategory	Funding Awarded	Award Count
Category 1	Australian Research Council (ARC)	\$640,300	1
	Commonwealth Other	\$1,022,591	1
	Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF)	\$5,041,569	5
	National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)	\$9,504,311	5
	Other	\$190,000	1
Category 1		\$16,398,771	13
Category 2	Commonwealth (other)	\$299,823	1
	Commonwealth (own purpose)	\$3,653,411	1
	State/Territory/Local (own purpose)	\$545,338	4
Category 2		\$4,498,572	6
Category 3	Australian for-profit organisations	\$481,950	1
	Australian not-for profit organisations	\$993,264	7
	Australian philanthropy	\$250,000	1
	International for-profit organisations	\$99,983	1
Category 3		\$1,825,197	10
Not specified	Not Applicable	\$2,243,409	6
	Not Specified	\$149,374	3
Not specified		\$2,392,783	9
Total		\$25,115,323	38

PUBLICATIONS

These figures are derived from the Monash University Power BI system and are likely to be incomplete in terms of outputs by adjuncts, and incomplete collection of conference presentations.

Summary	2023	
Output Indicator – Research	Output Count	% of Total
Research	256	74%
Not Research	88	26%
Total	344	100%

Research	2023
Output Subtype (Top 5)	Output Count
Article (journal)	222
Review Article (journal)	31
Chapter (Book)	2
Other Report	1
Total	256

Not Research	2023
Output Subtype (Top 5)	Output Count
Article (journal)	21
Comment / Debate (journal)	14
Letter (journal)	14
Meeting Abstract (journal)	21
Chapter (Book)	2
Review Article (journal)	2
Other	14
Total	88

PUBLICATIONS

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FINANCE

A Detailed financial statement is provided for 2023. In brief:

- Revenue: \$27,909,313, an increase of \$1,980,313 over 2022.
- Research revenue \$14,045,030.
- Expenditure: \$25,720,045.
- Operating result: \$2,189,268.

INCOME STATEMENT 2023

	2022	2023
Financial Plan	2,739,457	2,189,268
Operating Revenue	25,929,386	27,909,313
Commonwealth Government Grants DEEWR	6,500,492	5,669,323
Student Fees	3,677,303	4,653,620
Research	13,263,827	14,045,030
Commercial	1,834,506	2,196,487
Other Grants & Donations	135,464	741,990
Other Revenues	-	-
Internal Grants & Support	-	23,584
Inter Faculty Transfers	50,000	(1,900)
Intra Entity Contributions	(844,795)	(839,294)
Intra Entity Allocations	1,312,588	1,420,472
Operating Expenditure	23,189,929	25,720,045
Salary and Related Expenses	13,841,117	16,689,842
Infrastructure related expenses	383,786	446,423
Finance Incentive	-	-
Financial and administration expenses	38,358	223,079
Student scholarships and awards	199,306	294,200
Other Operating Expenses	1,949,324	760,722
Depreciation	58,532	70,806
Direct & Central Overhead Charges	4,687,394	5,125,509
Space Charges	24,023	24,721
Other Overhead Costs	2,008,088	2,084,744
Contract Recoveries	-	-
Net Cash Position	21,214,831	22,232,305
Net Cash from Plan	2,797,989	2,260,075
Capital Expenditures	42,567	155,933
Previous Year Funds	18,459,409	20,128,163





