

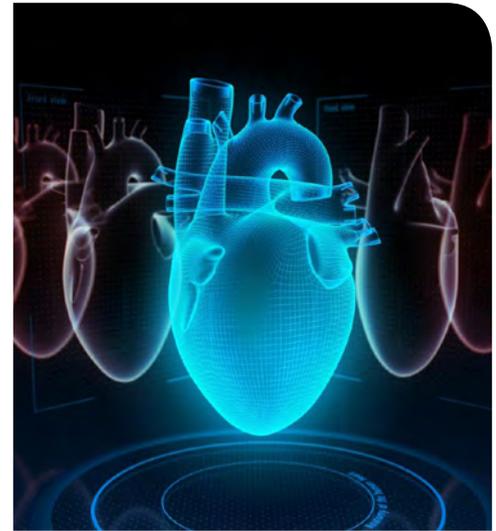
# KOLLING INSTITUTE

OCTOBER 2019 | issue 3

# NEWS



**North Foundation  
launched to enhance  
healthcare and research**



**Kolling researchers part  
of elite group in fight  
against heart disease**



**Delivering presentations  
people remember**

Discovery into reality



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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**



**Health**  
Northern Sydney  
Local Health District



# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR of RESEARCH

It has been a busy few months at the Kolling Institute with much to celebrate, not just in the field of research, but with our future goals and plans.

In a significant step forward in the Kolling Institute's future, the Joint Venture Agreement between our partners, the University of Sydney and Northern Sydney Local Health District, has now been signed.

The Agreement provides a new governance structure for the Institute which enables us to focus on our core strategic priorities of producing world leading research that translates to our patients.

In other pleasing news, work is progressing on the Institute's five-year strategic plan. In coming months, workshops and meetings will be held with research teams and stakeholders to help shape the Kolling's purpose, future directions and goals.

Two Kolling Institute researchers have welcomed a significant funding boost through a large NSW Government program to help tackle Australia's number one killer, heart disease.

Professors Gemma Figtree and Martin Ugander have each been awarded a \$750,000 grant to encourage researchers to find breakthroughs and help establish NSW as a centre for research excellence.

The funding is part of a broader program investing \$150 million in cardiovascular research over the next 10 years. It's hoped the cash injection will help drive scientific discoveries and develop innovative therapies for cardiovascular disease.

Congratulations must go to Professor David Hunter who has received the Vice Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Research by the University of Sydney.

The award is a testament to David's prolific research that has made significant and lasting impact in the field of osteoarthritis. Ranked among the world's leading experts in osteoarthritis, David is a rheumatologist at Royal North Shore Hospital and over the course of his career, he has published more than 420 peer reviewed papers.

Personally, I had the pleasure of lecturing at the International Congress of Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders in Nice in September where I spoke about the research work that my and I are performing here at the Kolling.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the Kolling news.

## Kolling researchers part of elite group in fight against heart disease

Two Kolling Institute researchers have welcomed a significant funding boost through a large NSW Government program to help tackle Australia's number one killer, heart disease.

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The funding is part of a broader program investing \$150 million in cardiovascular research over the next 10 years.

It's hoped the cash injection will help drive scientific discoveries and develop innovative therapies for cardiovascular disease.

Professor Figtree, who is an interventional cardiologist at RNSH, will look at the increasing number of people who suffer a heart attack despite not being seen as at risk.

She plans to identify new mechanisms and biological markers of both coronary artery disease susceptibility and resilience.

"Cardiovascular disease is our biggest killer of both men and women and it's not just killing us, it's dramatically affecting our health and wellbeing.



Professor Martin Ugander

"Our goal is to improve the early identification of people with the disease, including those with risk factors and those with only minimal clues. This will greatly help us target preventative strategies," she said.

Professor Ugander's work will focus on MRI technology to diagnose and treat heart failure patients who are difficult to identify and currently lack treatment. This includes those with heart failure due to high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity.

He will also evaluate new surgical treatment to improve the efficiency of the heart by reducing the size of the left atrium of the heart.



Professor Gemma Figtree

"Having recently arrived in Australia from Sweden, this funding will be instrumental in building our cardiac MRI research group, and training the next generation of cardiovascular researchers in NSW.

"The grant will help provide important data on the ability of MRI to accurately identify disease in patients with suspected heart disease," he said.



## Reducing medications: implementing review and withdrawal of unnecessary medications into routine hospital care

Peak health bodies have welcomed the findings of a two year research project to reduce inappropriate medications for older people in hospital.

Professor Sarah Hilmer, Head of Department of Clinical Pharmacology at Royal North Shore Hospital and lead researcher in Ageing and Pharmacology at the Kolling and University of Sydney, recently presented her research to stakeholders from local health districts, primary health networks, the NSW department of health agencies, academics and consumers.

Prof Hilmer is leading a team of researchers which is studying the effects of polypharmacy in the elderly and investigating safe ways to withdraw unnecessary medications (deprescribe).

Polypharmacy is where a patient takes multiple concurrent medications. It can have unintended and dangerous effects on the elderly, including an increased risk of falls and cognitive impairment.

“Fifty per cent of older Australians are taking medicines that are unnecessary, or where the harm currently outweighs the benefit for them,” said Prof Hilmer.

“There’s been a huge increase in the number of medicines available. People are starting to use them as preventative treatments in middle age and continuing them into old age as they accumulate more medications for more medical problems.”

Prof Hilmer is best known for developing the Drug Burden Index, a clinical risk assessment tool to identify an older person’s total exposure to drugs that slow them down, physically and mentally. The effects of these drugs are cumulative and may be misattributed to disease or to ‘just getting old’.

In a translational research project funded by NSW Health, she is investigating the best way to integrate medication review using the Drug Burden Index into routine hospital care.

Prof Hilmer and her colleagues determined the key features for an electronic decision support system (EDS), which would assist doctors in assessing patients’ medications and safely initiating deprescribing in hospital. This informed development of software integrated with the

hospital electronic medical record, which has been built by eHealth NSW and tested with junior and senior doctors and pharmacists in NSLHD.

As part of the two year project, Prof Hilmer and her colleagues have developed a package of resources for clinicians, consumers and health organisations to make it easier when assessing patients’ medications and safe ways to deprescribe in hospital.

Medication review in hospital is in line with patient expectations. One consumer stated, ‘I would suspect it [medication review] would be an essential part of diagnosing of my condition and the reason for my admission to hospital.... I would probably be delighted [to have one of my regular medicines reduced or stopped in hospital] after years of having to take them’.

Polypharmacy affects almost one million older Australians. Multiple medication use in older people is often harmful and unnecessary, contributing to the \$1.2 billion national annual cost of medicine-related hospital admissions.

In her role as a geriatrician at RNSH, Prof Hilmer sees the adverse effects that multiple drugs can have on older people, and the reversibility of these effects when unnecessary medications are deprescribed. This is why she is passionate to change the way medications are reviewed and prescribed during routine care in hospitals.

Prof Hilmer has been instrumental in pushing for change nationally. She recently led a national strategic plan calling to halve the use of unnecessary medications in older people. This aligns with the aims of the current World Health Organisation 3rd Global Patient Safety Challenge: Medication without harm.



## Recognition for research excellence

Congratulations to Professor David Hunter who's received a prestigious University of Sydney Vice Chancellor's award for outstanding research.

The Kolling researcher and rheumatology clinician is regarded as one of the world's leading experts in osteoarthritis.

Professor Hunter's research has had a significant and lasting impact in the field of osteoarthritis, influencing clinical practice and access to evidence-based care. His work has helped to ensure low-value, fragmented care has been replaced with a co-ordinated, patient-centred system.

The Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Excellence celebrate exceptional performance, recognising a researcher's impact, leadership and engagement with industry and the community.

Professor Hunter welcomed the award, and acknowledged his team.

"It takes a village to make a difference to a disease such as osteoarthritis, and I am privileged to work with an amazing team who are the real winners of this award," he said.



## Research identifies health impact of traffic accidents

More than 40 per cent of people injured in a traffic accident are psychologically distressed one month after their accident, with many of those suffering depression and post-traumatic stress symptoms.

The research forms part of the latest findings into the physical and emotional impact of motor vehicle crash injuries by the team from the John Walsh Centre for Rehabilitation Research.

Clinician and Kolling Institute researcher Professor Ashley Craig said their results follow a five year study involving more than 2,000 people injured in a motor vehicle accident.

"One in three people injured in a traffic accident suffer depression and experience post-traumatic stress symptoms," Professor Craig said.

"By following patients over a long period of time, we now recognise that people suffering psychological distress are at a higher risk of developing severe mental health disorders, chronic pain and long-term disability, and that it can take much longer for them to recover.

"This can lead to a dramatic increase in costs and take four times longer for crash survivors to recover."

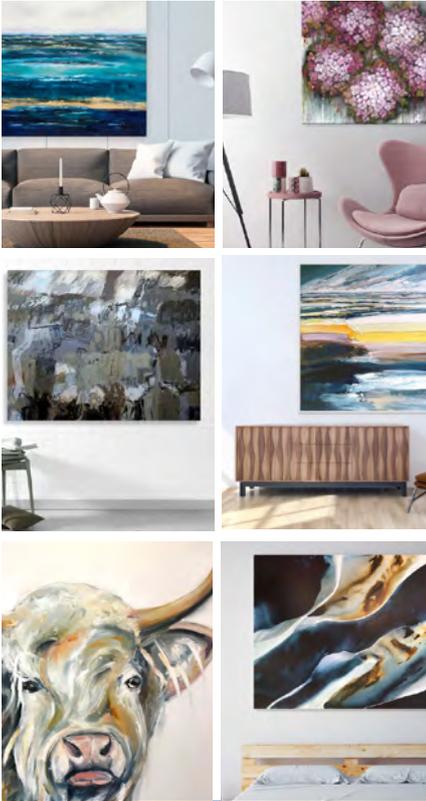
Professor Ian Cameron said the team also examined factors influencing health outcomes after motor vehicle crash injury and approaches to improving wellbeing.

"Traditional medical models often fail to assist recovery after a crash," Professor Cameron said.

"Our research has shown that a return to usual activities as soon as possible is beneficial, challenging earlier recommendations that rest is best.

"We have seen that family support, flexibility from employers, such as altered duties, and early treatment covered by insurance companies, all contribute to a quicker recovery.

"With traffic injuries predicted to become the third leading cause of global burden by 2030, we hope that our findings will help influence future government policy and drive further reforms within the compensation system."



## Art with Heart

A special art exhibition is being staged to help support Mitochondrial Disease research.

The Martine Gallery at Northbridge is hosting the exhibition dubbed Art with Heart.

It opens on October 22 from 6pm.

All the sales from the exhibition will be donated to the Kolling Institute for an LED light therapy trial, and it's hoped around \$100,000 will be made.

The therapy could potentially treat patients with Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, Motor Neurone disease, Cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer.

The Martine Gallery is at 44 Sailors Bay Road, Northbridge.

<https://neurogenetics.everydayhero.com/au/martine>



Julie McCrossin and cancer team

## Delivering presentations people remember

Kolling Institute cancer researchers were given an opportunity to spend the day with presenter Julie McCrossin.

Julie spent more than 20 years as a radio broadcaster and is now a freelance journalist, facilitator, trainer and speaker. Julie invests a large share of her time supporting research initiatives, and in recent years has received treatment for head and neck cancer.

Julie delivered an impressive workshop for the Kolling team, discussing the secrets to a successful presentation, where audiences are engaged and enthusiastic participants.

Bill Walsh Lab Research Director Viive Howell said the workshop was tremendously valuable as it gave the researchers some clear guidelines to consider for their next presentation.

"We are often required to speak to a group of people and the workshop provided us with a checklist for success to help us illustrate key points in memorable ways," she said.

"It was an amazing experience as Julie taught us how to actively involve our audience to give an authentic and engaging presentation."



Consumer Penny Clarke, NSLHD CE Deb Willcox and North Foundation CEO Gilbert Lorquet.



Dr Brendan Steinfort



Penny Clarke



Gilbert Lorquet

## North Foundation’s bold vision unveiled

A special event has been staged for the official launch of the NORTH Foundation, the fundraising partner of the Northern Sydney Local Health District and the Kolling Institute of Medical Research.

North Foundation Chief Executive Officer Gilbert Lorquet said it was

an exciting time for the foundation, with a new look and bold vision to enhance the healthcare provided across the district.

“With the help of generous donors, corporate partners and community support, we will be well placed to provide additional services and

equipment, and invest in cutting edge research,” he said.

“We are committed to becoming a major contributor to world class medical research and strengthening a community health system where people enjoy excellent care throughout their lives.”

### Latest News from the Kolling Institute

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**Health**  
Northern Sydney  
Local Health District

# Descending the analgesic ladder:

## The how, when and why of opioid tapering for chronic pain

9.00 – 18.00, Taronga Zoo, Sydney, Australia

A one-day symposium featuring 13 national and international experts on the role of opioids in chronic pain management

### About

Current guidelines recommend de-prescribing opioids for patients with chronic pain, however de-prescribing opioids in this population is challenging and a source of confusion for clinicians and patients alike. This symposium brings together local and international experts to address the complex challenges of de-prescribing opioid medications.

### Registration

Early bird AUD\$295\* (until Sept 30)

Regular AUD\$375\*

Registration includes coffee, morning and afternoon tea, lunch, and a social hour with drinks and canapes.

\*both incl. GST

### Speakers include:

**Professor Beth Darnall**

Stanford University, USA

**Assoc/Prof Joseph Frank**

University of Colorado, Denver and VA Eastern Colorado Health System, USA

**Professor Paul Glare**

Director, Pain Management Research Institute, The University of Sydney

**Professor Michael Nicholas**

Director, Pain Education and Pain Management Programs, The University of Sydney

**Dr Simon Holliday**

GP and Addiction Medicine Physician, Rural and regional NSW (Taree)

**Dr Chris Hayes**

Director, Hunter Integrated Pain Service, Hunter New England Health

**Dr Claire Ashton-James**

Pain Management Research Institute, The University of Sydney

**Conjoint Assoc/Prof Paul Wrigley**

Kolling Institute, Royal North Shore Hospital

**Ms Ruth White**

Senior Physiotherapist, Hunter New England Local Health District

**Ms Samanta Lalic**

Monash University

**Dr Gavin Pattullo**

Director, Acute Pain Services, Royal North Shore Hospital

### Learn how to:

- Communicate the risks of opioid use for chronic pain and the benefits of tapering
- Assess patients' appropriateness for opioid tapering and pain self-management
- Explain pain self-management to patients
- Develop a safe, patient-centred schedule for opioid tapering
- Individualised support for patients attempting opioid tapering
- Diagnose OUD

### Further information

For further information contact

[paineducation.admin@sydney.edu.au](mailto:paineducation.admin@sydney.edu.au)