

I always wanted to be a researcher...

If you want a clear example of how directly your donation dollar is helping to shape the future of heart research, look no further than PhD student Brad McEwen.

Brad is investigating the effects of fish oil. There is a lot of talk about fish oil these days but there has been surprisingly little solid research done.

Brad wants to address some of this knowledge shortfall. He is going beyond the well-known idea of fish oil as a heart disease preventative. Instead he wants to know – can fish oil make a difference to people who already have cardiovascular disease?

No PhD is easy and Brad's study has been demanding. But he's happy to put in the many long hours it takes to investigate this fascinating question.

"I've been tracking 40 volunteers and 18 patients taking fish oil and there have been quantifiable changes in the functioning of their blood, such as coagulation," Brad says, "There's still a lot to work through, but the implications are really exciting."

Despite the long hours and sacrifices, Brad's PhD has confirmed for him his love of research and his fascination with the intricacies of the cardiovascular system.

"I always wanted to be a researcher," he says, "When I complete my PhD I'll continue in research. There's so much more to know about nutrition and heart disease."

"I'm always telling my friends how much I love research and enjoy doing it," Brad says, "But if it wasn't for the scholarship, I'd really struggle."

The scholarship that is helping Brad focus on his research is a Foundation PhD scholarship valued at \$30,000 per year.

Brad is just one of many inspiring researchers who have received this scholarship. It has proudly underpinned the remarkable work of some very talented young people. It's also energised the early careers of a number of professionals now working in cardiac care and research.

Providing the PhD Scholarships program to inquisitive, hardworking people like Brad is one of the most valuable things the Foundation does. According to senior researcher, cardiologist and PhD supervisor, Dr Gemma Figtree, the scholarship program is one reason why the North Shore Hospital campus has such a vibrant community of researchers.

"The Foundation Scholarships are absolutely essential to the PhD students who get them," says Gemma, "These guys are giving up a lot to commit themselves to a career in high level research. The fact is, they could earn more money doing other things but they want to do this. They want to research and learn. They want to make a difference." >



"A lot of what I've done in the last year has been possible because of the scholarship," he says, "I've even been able to stretch it so I could present my work not just locally but overseas at conferences in Chicago and Japan."



Welcome

Welcome to 2012 and our summer edition of *Take Heart*. I hope you have had a wonderful festive season and a great start to the year.

It is a pleasure for me to introduce myself as the new CEO for the Foundation, a role I feel privileged to be in. Over the years I have worked in both the corporate

and not-for-profit sectors, in varying roles from software and business development, marketing to fundraising. But regardless of the job, at the heart of everything I do has always been the belief that it is important to make a contribution and a difference where one can.

Originally I am from West Sussex, England, but after falling in love with Australia during a work related visit earlier in my career, I decided to make it my home. It is this love for Australia that makes my job at the Foundation especially important to me – being in a position to make sure generations to come have a better chance of surviving heart disease, today's number one killer, and have a healthier shot at life.

With recent research showing that the number of women dying from repeat heart attacks is seriously on the rise, I am particularly passionate about looking at ways to help families realise that heart disease is a big deal for all Australians.

2011 was an important year for the Foundation as it celebrated 25 years of research excellence. This year will be about looking ahead and finding new ways to spread the message that heart research saves lives. It is only the beginning of the year, and we have already allocated \$750,000 to new research projects and are gearing up for this year's touch football challenge (details on the back page).

Needless to say, I am looking forward to what lies ahead and know that thanks to supporters like you, we can make a difference.

Until next time,

Floyd Larsen, CEO

PS – If you have already given to our summer appeal, thank you for your generosity. If not and you would like to support the next generation of heart researchers, please head to heartresearch.com.au and make a donation today.

To receive our e-newsletter and other information about our activities, go to heartresearch.com.au and click on

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Continued...

The long hours, the hard work, the lifestyle sacrifices, the financial constraints – there are so many reasons why someone might decide a PhD is too hard. Yet the applications for PhD scholarships keep arriving at the Foundation and the students still have that fire in their eyes.

“During the PhD program, each individual becomes an expert in their focussed research area. Their discoveries often make significant contributions to their fields,” says Gemma. “It’s such a satisfying feeling. Doing a PhD is the greatest opportunity to learn.”

Each scholarship granted by the Foundation is like opening another door to the future of cardiac research. With brilliant young minds applying themselves to one of Australia’s greatest health challenges – heart disease – anything is possible. For more about our PhD scholarship program and Brad’s research visit heartresearch.com.au/our-work

Research update

Brad has just finished wrapping up the first phase of his study, with the preliminary results looking promising. He will now be embarking on the next phase, where he will be testing whether omega-3 fish oil altered the levels of certain molecules that are a result of stress on the cardiovascular system.

The scholarship program can only exist through the generous contributions we receive from our wonderful family of supporters. Help us continue this program by making a donation to our Summer Appeal at heartresearch.com.au.

The Foundation is proud to provide financial support to the North Shore Cardiovascular Education Centre

Based at Sydney’s Royal North Shore Hospital, the nationally recognised **Cardiovascular Education Centre** conducts rehabilitation and lifestyle education programs for people who have been diagnosed with a cardiac condition or who are at high risk of developing heart disease. If you meet the above criteria and are motivated to adopt some lifestyle changes to improve your heart health, contact the Centre for more information on **02 9926 6560** or **02 9926 8286**. Please also discuss this with your GP.

For people who are living with an **implantable cardioverter defibrillator**, the centre runs a special support group, also open to friends or family. For more information contact Ann Kirkness on **02 9926 6560**.

(A special thanks to sponsors St Jude, Biotronik, Medtronic and Boston Scientific for their support.)



what's new?

\$750,000 allocated to new research

Through its 2012 grants round the Foundation is allocating \$750,000 to new research projects. This brings the Foundation's funding commitment to \$4 million over the next three years. Among the outcomes anticipated from the new research is a better understanding of smoking cessation through a novel method, how cardiac surgery can occasionally cause kidney injury, the way cardiac damage can result from illicit drug use, an alternative to warfarin, and a new treatment option for heart attack victims.

New Imaging Fellowship a success

In 2011 the Foundation's inaugural Advanced Cardiovascular Imaging Fellowship commenced, made possible by the financial support of General Electric, Toshiba, Medtronic, and North Shore Radiology. It was designed to create a specialized training program on the North Shore Hospital Campus in advanced non-invasive cardiovascular imaging, including new techniques in echocardiography, CT, and MR. Dr Tim Tan, the first Fellow, completed his cardiac training at Westmead Hospital and his PhD at the University of Sydney. His exceptional clinical and research track record, and passion for cutting edge development of cardiovascular imaging, made him a perfect candidate for the position. During his Fellowship, Dr Tan produced several scientific papers and presented his work at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand.

Heart attack survivors at risk of repeat attack

A new report has shown that the numbers of Australians dying from repeat heart attacks is rising and is expected to increase over 40% by 2020. Even more alarming is that repeat attacks are more likely to be fatal, and that women have even less of a chance of surviving than men. According to the report, many heart attack survivors do not understand the chronic nature of their condition and the importance of adhering to the lifestyle changes and taking their medication.

(ACS in Perspective: The importance of secondary prevention, Deloitte Access Economics, November 2011)

New insight into bereavement and blood pressure

Latest results from Foundation funded research show that those bereaving can have unstable blood pressure, putting them at higher risk of heart problems and stroke. At the recent international scientific meeting of the American Heart Association in Orlando USA, Dr Anastasia Susie Mihailidou presented findings from the Cardiovascular Health in Bereavement study, reporting both higher blood pressure and greater fluctuations in blood pressure in bereaved participants compared to non-bereaved participants, that started as early as 2 weeks and persisted throughout the first 6 months of bereavement. This finding of heightened fluctuating blood pressure is novel and offers further insight into cardiac risk in bereavement. These recent studies have concluded that higher blood pressure variability is a strong predictor of stroke, heart failure, angina, and myocardial infarction, independent of the patient's mean blood pressure.

Have researchers found the master switch for heart attacks?

Researchers have shown how to reduce the size of and injury from a heart attack by targeting a 'master' gene that triggers other genes responsible for inflammation of and injury to the heart during a heart attack. According to lead researcher, Dr Ravinay Bhindi, a cardiologist at Royal North Shore Hospital, this treatment has the potential to improve current recovery and survival rates from heart attacks, helping survivors resume a normal lifestyle. This is the first study to show that you can effectively deliver gene silencing medications acutely via methods already being used to treat heart attacks, in order to further reduce injury and improve recovery. An article about this research was recently published in the Journal of Pathology and featured on ABC TV news in November 2011.

For more information about our research head to heartresearch.com.au/our-work

Give a gift in memory

A gift in memory is a fitting way to pay tribute to someone special. Make a lasting gift towards life saving research, in lieu of flowers, and help our researchers fight heart disease. Donation envelopes are available on **02 9436 0056** or enquiries@heartresearch.com.au

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We are now on Facebook so please like us and help spread the message that heart research saves lives.

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Ask the doctor

With Professor Geoffrey Tofler

Q Does the heart literally stop when someone has a heart attack?

A Although "heart attack" is a term that is used often, it can lead to confusion because it overlaps with two conditions; myocardial infarction and sudden cardiac death.

Myocardial infarction more scientifically means that there is damage to the heart muscle. The damage is usually due to a blocked coronary artery that prevents adequate blood supply and oxygen to the affected part of the heart muscle. On the other hand, sudden cardiac death occurs when a severe abnormal heart rhythm results in the heart being unable to pump blood adequately to sustain life. The two most common heart rhythms resulting in sudden death are ventricular fibrillation (a very fast, quivering motion of the heart) and asystole (when the heart really does stop beating). If not rapidly treated with a shock from a defibrillator, the ventricular fibrillation will eventually change to asystole. Both conditions require urgent resuscitation.

You have probably heard the expression – "time is muscle". This refers to the observation that the quicker a blocked artery can be opened up, the less heart muscle damage occurs. So a rapid telephone call to the ambulance to get

a patient to hospital, ideally within an hour of symptoms, to have the artery opened up, can greatly limit the amount of damage. Another important advantage of having an ambulance come rapidly is that the risk of sudden cardiac death due to an abnormal heart rhythm is greatest in the first hour. This can be prevented by having a defibrillator in the ambulance. Also, the placement of defibrillators in public places can help in allowing rapid defibrillation.

While a myocardial infarction due to a blocked artery usually occurs without sudden cardiac death, and an abnormal heart rhythm leading to sudden cardiac death can occur in the absence of a myocardial infarction, the two certainly can occur together.

Despite possible confusion, the term "heart attack" correctly conveys the urgency and danger of the situation – and is still a useful one. It is also a reminder of the need to recognise and seek medical help for any warning signs for a heart attack (such as chest tightness, new shortness of breath or fatigue), and not ignore them. People on medication for blood pressure and cholesterol, or on aspirin and plavix after a stent, also need to be fastidious in taking their medication; and not, as one of my recent patients said, take a "drug holiday".

A toast to future generations

On 28 October 2011, friends of the Foundation joined together at the Ivy, Sydney to celebrate 25 years of life saving research.

Master of Ceremonies Chris Russell opened the night by sharing his personal story of surviving a heart attack, and then launching a touching film about how heart research saves lives. (The heartfelt film, produced by Trapdoor Productions, is available for viewing at heartresearch.com.au).

Special guest speaker The Honourable John Howard AC talked about why heart research and the charity spirit are so important for the Australian community.

Foundation Chairman Ray Knight and Vice Chairman Dr John Gunning spoke about the Foundation's history and the vision for the future, including the opportunities that researchers have to fight for a world without heart disease, thanks to our family of supporters.

Feedback from the evening has been tremendous, with guests particularly enjoying the fine food and wine, and dancing late into the night to the John Field Band.



(l-r) Foundation Ambassador Chris Russell, The Honourable John Howard AC, Foundation Chairman Ray Knight, The Honourable Jillian Skinner, Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research

With thanks

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Our special guest speaker

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Our Ambassadors

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Red & White Committee

Jenny Carr, Lori Farrar, Lynne Ravenhall, Fiona Taylor

To view photos from the dinner, head to our Facebook page.

Touch Footy Comp

kicks off again on Sunday 4 March 2012

Gather your team mates for fun and festivities at this one day competition as touch footy fans face off to become the ultimate sweetheart.

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Competition: Mixed

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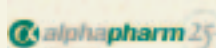


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Dedes Restaurant The Creative Zoo Trapdoor Production Holman Webb

Celebrity chef becomes Foundation Ambassador



Millions of Australians have watched him and his apprentice cook on Masterchef. You may have tasted his acclaimed cuisine at his restaurant Ormeggio at the Spit, or enjoyed a relaxing drink at his most recent venture, Spiedo Restaurant and Bar in the new Westfield in the city. Now heart attack survivor Alessandro Pavoni joins the Foundation as our Ambassador determined to spread the message that heart research saves lives.

“After my first heart attack, I kept hearing the doctors using jargon that later I learned were the names of cardiac procedures and methodologies that the Foundation had funded. That was when I first understood that I owed them my life,” said Alessandro.

“Being able to support the Foundation by being an Ambassador and sharing my story and support is really important to me. The more people that know about their great work the better for all of us!”

At the age of 36 Alessandro had his first heart attack, followed by another one in 2010. He was treated at Royal North Shore Hospital.

Hear more about how heart research has saved the life of Alessandro and other Australians in our new short film – visit heartresearch.com.au

About the North Shore Heart Research Foundation

North Shore Heart Research Foundation funds research into the treatment and prevention of heart disease and associated medical conditions. Our goal is to reduce the devastating impact of the disease on the community.



Baked ricotta with a witlof salad (Serves 5)

Ingredients (ricotta)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| ½ handful parsley, finely chopped | ½ kg buffalo ricotta |
| ½ bunch chives, finely chopped | 25 ml olive oil |
| 1 sprigs rosemary, finely chopped | pinch of salt |
| ½ handful mint leaves, finely chopped | |
| 25 g powdered parmesan | |

Ingredients (salad)

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| 20g toasted sliced almonds | 1 nectarines |
| 50g sugar | splash olive oil |
| 50ml water | pinch of salt |
| 1 heads of witlof | |

Method

- Pre-heat oven to 170°C and grease five 6cm ramekins
- Combine all ricotta ingredients and mix well together
- Pipe or spoon the mixture evenly into ramekins
- Bake in oven for 20–25 mins until they rise like a soufflé
- While the ricotta is cooking bring sugar and water to the boil to make a syrup, once the mixture boils remove from heat and set aside to bring to room temperature (can put it on ice to make cooling process quicker)
- Remove seed from nectarines and finely slice each one into about 20 pieces, add nectarines to cooled syrup
- Wash and dry witlof leaves and place into a bowl
- Add toasted almonds to witlof plus oil, salt, 1 teaspoon of sugar syrup and then the nectarines
- Remove ricotta from oven and de-mould
- Arrange salad ingredients on a plate and add ricotta

Tips

When plating the ricotta, brush a line of basil pesto across the plate so it sits under the salad and the ricotta – this is a lovely flavour to accompany the dish. To make this dish more heart healthy, use a low fat ricotta.

Thank you to Alessandro Pavoni for this summer delight!



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For more information on how you can help

Phone: 02 9436 0056
Fax: 02 9436 0058
Email: enquiries@heartresearch.com.au
Mail: PO Box 543, St Leonards, NSW 1590
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