

RESEARCH

New research grants
awarded

INTERVIEWS

Meet the new
Board members

COMMUNITY

Maggie Dent, REDFEB
and more

We Life

NEWSLETTER – ISSUE 1, 2024



Maggie Dent, beloved Australian parenting author, educator and speaker, raises awareness of heart health

PLUS: *New research projects, new board members, heart health tips and much more*

Giving **heart** to the future.

2024 off to a great start!



Hi, I trust 2024 has been as positive for you as it has been for us!

This year at HROz has been one of new and positive beginnings. We welcomed a new Board Chairman and 3 board directors; we have funded 5 new research projects and 2 PhD students – 3 of which we feature inside - and we have had support from none other than Australia's beloved parenting expert - Maggie Dent. Maggie, along with Assoc Prof Monique Watts, hosted an inspirational and informative webinar for us for REDFEB. If you missed it you can find a link to the recording on page 7.

Last, but not least, if you need some inspiration to keep or get those New Year's resolutions back on track, our nutritionist Chloe Steele and trainer Kieren Payne have some simple and cost-effective tips to keep your heart healthy.

So, I'm sure you'll enjoy the read and wishing you a very Happy Easter break.

Warm Regards,

Nicci Dent - CEO, Heart Research Australia

Meet the new Board Members

"We are stronger when we work together, build trust and leverage the value of diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and talent."

This quote from one of our new Board members Julie Anne Mitchell really sums up our approach here at Heart Research Australia. We have always been fortunate to have attracted high-calibre and dedicated people to our Board and in late 2023 we welcomed 4 new Board members Gary Edstein, Alison Brink, Julie-Anne Mitchell and Megan O'Leary.

We are so grateful to have these talented and passionate individuals joining the HROz team.

However, it is with sadness we say goodbye to Tony Crawford, who after 12 years has decided to step down as Chairman. We wanted to say a huge thank you to Tony. We are so very fortunate to have benefitted from his expertise, strong governance and leadership - he will be missed.

On the bright side Gary Edstein has stepped up to the role of Chairman, and we really look forward to working with him.

Following are some short introductions to our new Board members, to give you an insight into the skills and personal attributes they bring to their positions.

GARY EDSTEIN - Chairman

Gary started as a Board Director in 2023 and is now taking over the role of Chairman.

Gary comes to HROz after a 47-year career in transport, including 20 years as CEO of DHL Express in Oceania. As he headed towards retirement, Gary says *"I was motivated to join HROz as I wanted to continue my involvement with the Charity sector and give back to the community. Having been on the board of Camp Quality for 10 years, I felt it was time to join another NFP and share my corporate and network experience."*



Gary and his wife

"My view, from being on the board last year, is that HROz is in great shape, with a fantastic Board and leadership team. I am honoured to take over the Chair from Tony Crawford who, through his board leadership, has left HROz in a strong financial and governance position. We now have 4 new board members, including me, and I am looking forward to refreshing our strategy and supporting Nicci and her team."

My vision is to see HROz continue its strong governance culture and build on our strategy, especially fundraising, in order to allocate more research funds.

When I am not working with my charities, you'll find me focusing on my family and enjoying my beautiful grandchildren. My wife and I are fortunate to have 2 grandchildren and another 2 on the way. They are a joy - as any grandparent will tell you.

To have the opportunity to work with an organisation that aims to create a better future for them, and all Australians, is very motivating and something I am very passionate about, so I am very happy to be on board".

ALISON BRINK - Board Director

For new director Alison Brink, the cause of heart research is personal. From a small child she grew up with heart disease in her family, and her husband's family has been impacted too. She says, *"It has given me a first-hand understanding of the hugely significant impact it has, not only on the life of the person with it, but also those around them."*

This is also why, when I learnt of the work that HROz was doing, I was keen to join the team to help try and make a tangible difference in raising awareness of the importance of heart health, as well as helping provide resources to facilitate the research."

Alison has a highly successful career in marketing and communications for large global organisations, which has

seen her live and work all around the world. She says, *"My approach is to be focussed on understanding the issues that need to be addressed, identifying target markets and communicating relevant messages to many different audiences, through a variety of channels, in a simple and effective way."*



Alison with her family

I believe these skills are transferable across a wide range of areas and I'm hoping to be able to work with the HROz team to share some of the things that I know have proven to produce results.

I am already enjoying my role on the Board as they are an interesting and diverse group of people who bring a wide range of skills and experience to the table. I also get to learn from people who I would never otherwise have had the opportunity to work with."

An avid traveller, in her down time, you'll find Alison planning the next trip, kayaking, playing golf or tennis, or just enjoying long walks with her husband and Harry the dog.

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JULIE ANNE MITCHELL - Board Director

New Director Julie Anne Mitchell brings a very unique skill set and experience to the HROz Board. Not only has she had a 25 year + career as a senior executive in the design and delivery of public health programs across both the government and non-government sector (in the areas of heart research, tobacco control, public health nutrition, primary prevention, and women's health), but she also has direct personal experience of heart disease - with three of her four grandparents dying of heart disease and her father having had a massive stroke 15 years ago.



Julie Anne in Tasmania with husband Lindsay in March 2023

Julie Anne says, "I am committed to making a positive difference. Having been involved in high level government committees, think tanks and clinical guideline committees, I have clear insight into the challenges facing health delivery in Australia and believe my skills, knowledge and connections can add value to the Board".

She says she's really enjoyed being on the Board so far as, "There is a strong adherence to good Board governance and a collegiate relationship that exists between board members, despite differences in skills and background. The Board's relationship with Nicci, the CEO, and her team is also positive and encouraging, which is good to see, as it is my personal belief that we are stronger when we work together, build trust and leverage the value of diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and talent."

Outside her business involvements, Julie Anne sums up her interest as: food, friends, family, book club, films, theatre and active holidays (not necessarily in that order!).

MEGAN O'LEARY - Board Director

The name Megan O'Leary may be familiar to some of you as we featured this wonderful person in our April 2023 newsletter. In 2019, Megan, a healthy 48-year-old mother, was having a routine medical check-up, when they discovered she had 4 life-threatening heart blockages, and was days away from a massive heart attack.

After her experience Megan became passionate about spreading the message about recognising the symptoms of heart disease, especially in women, and about encouraging research into the disease. She became an ambassador and significant fundraiser for HROz's 2023 REDFEB campaign.

In addition to her first-hand heart experience, Megan has also had a 20 + years professional career in the financial services industry working in private markets investing, which covered governance and risk management frameworks, to investing in direct assets and managed funds.

Megan was appointed to the Board in August 2023, and she says she is, "impressed both with the efficiency and high standard of governance at the Board level, and the communication between Board and staff. We are all here for the same reason.

I am currently helping the HROz Board review its investment strategy and portfolio. I love this work and want to help the organisation get the best it can from its investments so that we can support more up and coming cardiology researchers. We owe it to our donors and researchers.



Megan and her sons

I am also so glad to be a part of HROz as I want to live my best life and be of service where I can. I try to be kind and compassionate and to set a good example to my children so that they grow up caring about the health and well-being of others, their community and the world".

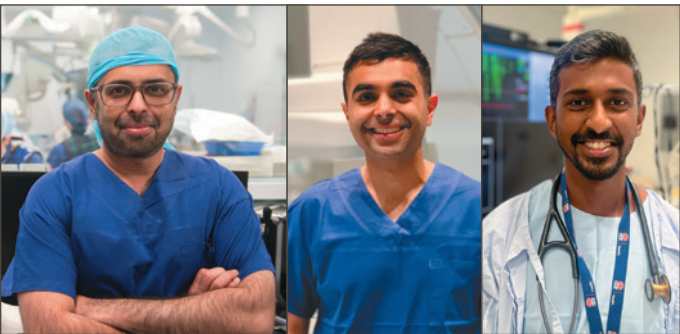
New researchers and projects

It's always wonderful to fund new research projects and this year, with the help of your generous donations, we have added another 5 new research projects and 2 new PhD grants.

Here's a quick look at some of the new projects:

Advanced Risk Prediction in Cardiovascular Disease

Professor Ravinay Bhindi (with Dr Usaid Allahwala and Dr Hari Prakash Sritharan)



Prof Ravinay Bhindi, Dr Usaid Allahwala & Dr Hari Prakash Sritharan

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a leading cause of mortality and morbidity worldwide, imposing an enormous burden on healthcare systems and public health. Given the significant impact of CVD, there is an urgent need for more accurate risk prediction models to identify individuals at high risk and to enable patients to get early help through intervention and tailored preventive strategies.

Machine learning (ML) has emerged as a powerful tool in healthcare research, holding the potential to revolutionise CVD risk assessment by harnessing the vast amount of clinical and demographic data available.

The existing risk prediction models for CVD are based on traditional statistical approaches and tend to have limitations in terms of accuracy, especially for individualised predictions. ML algorithms, including deep learning and ensemble methods, offer an opportunity to improve the precision and personalisation of CVD risk assessment.

This research project delves into the development and application of ML-based risk prediction algorithms to enhance the management of three critical cardiovascular conditions: ST-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI), severe aortic stenosis (AS), and COVID-19-associated cardiovascular outcomes.

The aim is to leverage the power of artificial intelligence (AI) and predictive modelling to optimise patient care and improve clinical decision-making in cardiovascular medicine. This is a promising step towards more efficient, data-driven healthcare decision-making, which could ultimately improve patient outcomes and reduce the burden on the health system.

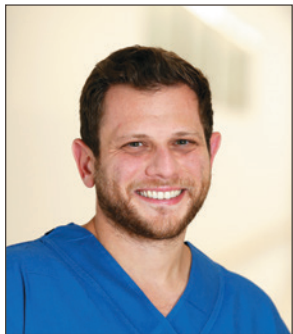
Prospective Australasian National Bifurcation Coronary Intervention Outcomes Registry (ABC Registry)

Professor Ravinay Bhindi (with Dr Avedis Ekmejian and Dr Usaid Allahwala)

In Australia and New Zealand, more than 100,000 coronary artery stenting procedures (percutaneous coronary intervention, or PCI) occur on an annual basis to open up narrowed coronary arteries. 15-20% of these stenting procedures occur in arteries that bifurcate (or split, like a fork in the road), making these procedures technically more challenging, and requiring different strategies and equipment to optimise the outcomes of these procedures.

Despite the substantial volume of these procedures, there is conflicting evidence regarding the ideal strategies that should be employed to optimise the outcomes for these procedures, largely due to there being few prospective, well-designed studies which investigate this. Specifically, there is conflicting evidence as to whether one stent should be used, or whether two stents, including one in

the side-branch (similar to an exit from a highway), would provide a better outcome. There are many other unknowns, leaving clinicians guessing what would provide the best outcome for their patients. Lastly, cardiologists in ANZ have no way of assessing the quality of their work, due to a lack of audit or registry to feedback outcomes.



Dr Avedis Ekmejian

The ABC Registry will be the first registry in ANZ, specifically investigating the different techniques and equipment used to perform Bifurcation PCI. Data will be collected prospectively (ie patients recruited before or immediately after the procedure) to provide invaluable information to clinicians regarding which techniques are best performed in certain circumstances. This data will be fed back to clinicians, so that outcomes for the patients can continuously be optimised and improved.

Finding ways to identify patients that may be suitable for same day discharge (SDD) after minimalistic (TAVI) transfemoral transcatheter aortic valve implantation.

Dr Neila Likouhi (with Professor Ravinay Bhindi, Dr Peter Hansen and Dr Karan Rao)

TAVI stands for Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation which is a safe and effective treatment for patients with symptomatic aortic stenosis (AS). During a TAVI procedure a valve is implanted into the heart to help repair a damaged aortic valve.

Aortic Stenosis is prevalent in older people, so as the population ages it's estimated that by 2025 the number of TAVI procedures globally will reach 300,000.

After undergoing a minimalist TAVI procedure, a patient can be discharged the next day – this is called Next Day Discharge (NDD) and has been effectively and successfully implemented in many TAVI centres globally, with benefits to the patient and healthcare system.

This project is the first Australian prospective study which will trial same day discharge (SDD) in suitable low-risk patients after TAVI.

The project aims to demonstrate whether SDD is a feasible and safe clinical pathway. The researchers will establish a clinical pathway to identify patients eligible for SDD, and that they are comprehensively assessed for early signs of complications to ensure they can continue to recover safely at home.

If it proves successful it will provide a standardised framework for other centres, nationally and globally, to implement SDD practices. The goal being to improve patient outcomes and the accessibility of TAVI, while reducing the burden on a stretched hospital system.



Dr Neila Likouhi

Vale, Helen and Keith

It is with great sadness that we report that late last year we as a community lost two of our special ambassadors and supporters – Helen Topalov and Keith Broadfoot. Helen was only 61 years old and Keith just 38 years old.

Both of these wonderful people allowed us to use their heart disease stories to raise awareness and generate funds for heart research, in the hope that the future would look different for people like them.

It is a stark reminder that heart disease still takes too many lives, and in many different ways. Helen's heart disease was likely caused when her heart was damaged due to radiation treatment for cancer, which she had in her early 20's, while Keith's heart attack at 32, was a "Why me Doc?" heart attack – namely one with no known cause, which happens to an otherwise healthy person.

Both Helen and Keith were inspirational in the way they lived their lives to the fullest.

Aside from her husband and 3 children, Helen's passion was animals (especially dogs). A visit



Keith with Prof Gemma Figtree

to Helen's house had you meeting her cockatoo, 2 cats, 4 mini-Dachshunds and her newest love, Manu – the French Bull dog.

Keith was a fun guy with infectious enthusiasm and a beaming smile. An active and passionate athlete, he loved cycling and triathlons - completing the Berlin Marathon just 21 months after his heart attack.

We are so grateful to both Helen and Keith for their contribution to making the world a better place, and our condolences go out to Helen's family, husband Michael and children Nick, Jack and Alex, and Keith's family and wide circle of friends.



Helen and some of her dogs

Heart Health on a Budget

This February saw us run our annual REDFEB campaign to raise heart awareness. This year our focus was on helping raising awareness about how Australians can take control of their cardiovascular well-being without breaking the bank – a particularly relevant topic as many households are feeling the financial squeeze right now.

Maggie Dent and Assoc Prof Monique Watts talk about making your heart a health priority.

As part of REDFEB, we were fortunate to have Australia's beloved parenting expert, Maggie Dent and cardiologist Assoc Prof Monique Watts join us to discuss how to make your heart health a priority. They shared their experiences and expertise, shedding light on the importance of prioritising your heart health, taking swift action and having regular check-ups – as well as cost effective ways to look after your heart.

For Maggie her heart health journey started when her smartwatch alerted her to a high heart rate, leading to a diagnosis of atrial flutter, despite having no symptoms. She says, "My journey emphasises the importance of swift action, prioritising heart health, and routine check-ups. In financially challenging times, a heart-healthy lifestyle doesn't have to be expensive. Embrace simple joys like family walks and connecting with friends to reduce stress. It benefits your whole family's health and wallet".



Maggie Dent and Assoc Prof Monique Watts

We are so grateful to both Maggie and Monique for an enlightening discussion and for sharing their expertise.

If you missed the webinar you can find a link to the recording at heartresearch.com.au/redfeb/

Milestone - \$125,000 in funding for HROz

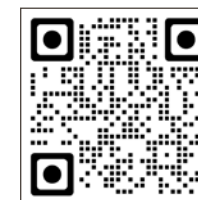
We all love a WIN-WIN and the Play For Purpose Charity Raffle is just that. For every \$10 ticket sold we get \$5 towards much needed heart research.

We are excited to say we have also reached a milestone. Thanks to our loyal and generous ticket buyers we have reached the \$125,000 mark in funds generated from this raffle towards heart research. So, thank you all so much!!

If you'd like to buy a ticket in the latest game go to www.playforpurpose.com.au/heart-research-australia or click on this QR code:



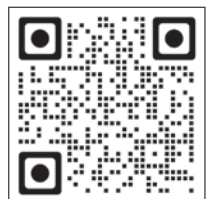
Lisa Forster, Sharna Harding from P4P with Miriam Morgan from HROz



Heart Health Tips

Continuing the Heart Health on a Budget theme our heart health club nutritionist Chloe Steele, and trainer Kieren Payne, Founder and Owner of Altern8 Training on Sydney's North Shore, have shared some of their favourite (and cost effective) ways to keep your heart healthy. Find easy ways to increase your vegetable intake, tips on managing stress, simple steps to increase your activity and much more on our website here:

www.heartresearch.com.au/heart-health-on-a-budget/ or by scanning this QR code:





Time to write your Will?

Getting around to writing or updating your Will can be stressful, so we often put it off. Yet it is something we know we need to do to ensure our own wishes and protect our loved ones.

And this is why we have made it easy, as Heart Research Australia has partnered with Safewill – who have helped thousands of Australians to safeguard their legacy. This offers you the opportunity to write your bespoke, legally valid Will online FREE of charge between 18 March and 7 April 2024.

Safewill is a leading online Will-writing platform. To write your Will is easy:

You go online, write your Will, helped by some prompts.

Once completed, the Will is reviewed by Safewill's Legal team, their affiliate law firm, to ensure correct completion.

You get a year of free and unlimited updates – if you change your mind!

While we hope that you may also consider leaving a gift in your Will to help further



advance lifesaving heart research, this is not a requirement, and all Wills remain confidential.

Remember even a gift of 1% of your estate can make a positive impact and help improve heart health for all Australians - so together we can reach our vision of a future where heart disease is a preventable and treatable condition.

For more information or to write your FREE Will please go to: <https://safewill.com/hroz>

If you would like to contact us directly about leaving a gift in your Will, please go to heartresearch.com.au/gifts-in-wills or contact Diane van de Merwe on (02) 9436 0056 or bequest@heartresearch.com.au

Thank you so much! ***Any legacy, small or large will have a positive impact on generations to come.***