

# BRAINWAVE BULLETIN

SEPTEMBER 2024



Chief Executive Office Professor Vicky Vass

## OUR LATEST NEWS

By Chief Executive Officer Professor Vicky Vass

I am thrilled to welcome you to this edition of Alzheimer's Research Australia's (ARA) newsletter. As we approach the end of 2024, it's a fitting time to reflect on the milestones we've achieved together and the exciting developments on the horizon.

In late July, our Clinical Trials Division (CTD) commenced recruitment for the ground breaking TRAILBLAZER-ALZ5 trial. This study focuses on Donanemab (Kisunla), a newly FDA-approved drug currently under review in Australia, which has shown great promise in slowing cognitive and functional decline in patients with mild cognitive impairment due to, and mild Alzheimer's disease. The drug works by removing amyloid plaque from the brain.

(continued inside...)

Introducing McSCI – Professor Sohrabi's 99.9% Accurate Tool for Early Dementia Detection.

**Read more about this breakthrough inside!**

Potential game-changing Alzheimer's treatments await TGA approval.

**Read more about this advancement inside!**

Our tax appeal was generously supported by many of our regular donors. **We are delighted to announce the appeal raised more than \$212,627.55!**

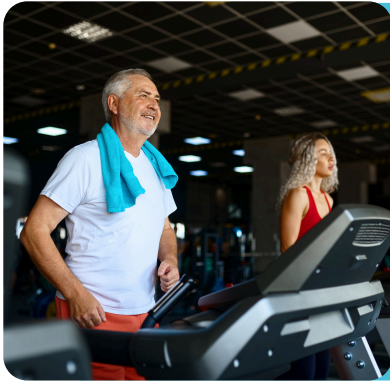
## IN THE POST!

We're excited to share that our Deputy Chair, Dr Terry Bayliss, was featured in the Post Newspapers for his induction into Ramsay Health Care's Honour Board, marking 30 years of service.

Dr Bayliss has been a valued member of ARA's Board since 2000. He has played a vital role in shaping our organisation, offering invaluable expertise and unwavering commitment to advancing dementia research.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Dr Bayliss on this well-deserved honour and thank him for his continued dedication!





We extend our sincere thanks to Hollywood Functional Rehabilitation Centre, Reps Movement, Reps Movement - Canning Vale, MTM Rehabilitation Gym, and EFL Bedford for their generous support of our AU ARROW Study. Your discounted memberships are vital in promoting exercise for Alzheimer's prevention and significantly enhance the well-being of our participants. We deeply appreciate your commitment and partnership in advancing our research.

## Our Latest News

(continued from page one)

This development is particularly exciting for ARA as we look to expand our organisational model to encompass prevention, research, and, hopefully, treatments in the near future—creating a comprehensive, one-stop hub for Alzheimer's.

We are also proud to congratulate Professor Hamid Sohrabi on his remarkable leadership in developing the McCusker Subjective Cognitive Impairment Inventory (McSCI) at Murdoch University with support from ARA. This innovative self-reporting tool is poised to transform the early detection and management of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. You can learn more about this ground breaking research in the detailed section of our newsletter.

We are thrilled to share some exciting news with our community! To further our mission and extend our impact, ARA has partnered with Perth Integrated Health (PIH) to offer a comprehensive 5-step cognitive screening for just \$100. Importantly, \$30 from each screening fee will be donated directly to support ARA's research.

This collaboration goes beyond financial support. By participating in the cognitive screening program, you contribute directly to vital Alzheimer's research and provide opportunities for potential participants to join our studies. During the screening at PIH, you may be referred to ARA for research, helping advance our understanding and treatment of Alzheimer's disease. Additionally, participants will have the chance to enhance cognitive reserve and abilities through PIH's therapy platforms. We encourage you to read more about this exciting partnership on our website.

Our recent supporter survey hit letterboxes and inboxes last month in the hope of gaining invaluable insights from our community. A heartfelt thank you to all who participated—your feedback is instrumental in shaping our future direction.

We're also delighted to share that our tax appeal raised an incredible \$212,627.55, which will directly support our research efforts.



### Perth Integrated Health's Cognitive Testing Technology

It is with immense respect and deep gratitude that we remember Peter Stevens, a former Board member of ARA. Peter's life was marked by his visionary leadership and heartfelt commitment to our mission. During his tenure, he was a guiding force, shaping our research with wisdom and compassion. His kindness, integrity, and dedication left an indelible mark on our work and the lives we touch.

Peter spent his last week making his goodbyes and shared meaningful moments with our Director of Research, Professor Ralph Martins, AO reflecting on our journey and future goals. At his farewell at the Royal Perth Golf Club, Peter's request for bright colours and fancy dress honoured his vibrant spirit. His presence will be greatly missed, but his legacy will endure in the work we continue in his honour.

Lastly, as many of you know, the Federal Government has announced the phase-out of cheques by 2027. If you currently donate by cheque, we encourage you to explore secure alternatives, such as online donations or electronic funds transfers.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our cause. Together, we are making strides in the fight against Alzheimer's and working towards a future where this disease is a distant memory.

Warm regards,

**Professor Vicky Vass**  
Chief Executive Officer



## RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

### Ground breaking Tool for Early Dementia Detection Unveiled.

**ARA is excited to announce the McCusker Subjective Cognitive Impairment Inventory (McSCI), a revolutionary tool for early dementia detection.**

Developed by Professor Hamid Sohrabi at Murdoch University, McSCI offers 99.9% accuracy in identifying moderate to severe cognitive decline.

This 46-item self-report questionnaire evaluates six cognitive areas, including memory and language, and is available free for clinicians and researchers. Early detection is crucial, as highlighted by ARA's Director of Research, Professor Ralph Martins, AO for improving treatment outcomes.

With dementia cases expected to reach 1 million by 2050, the McSCI is a vital resource for proactive management. CEO Professor Vicky Vass expressed enthusiasm for this game-changing tool, which promises to have a substantial impact on early detection and intervention.



**To find out about this revolutionary tool visit our website!**



**McCusker Intern - Rovin Randunu**

## Intern Spotlight

As an international student from Sri Lanka in my third year of psychology at The University of Western Australia, I'm aiming to become a psychologist. My next step is applying for an honours program and exploring research interests.

I joined the McCusker Internship program to gain practical experience in social awareness and active citizenship. My interest in Alzheimer's research, driven by my studies in psychology and neuroscience and personal family experiences, led me to intern at ARA.

So far, I've made steady progress on my project, which involves updating the grants register. The supportive environment, especially from my supervisor Caren Wilson, has been invaluable. I aim to finalise a Grant Calendar and develop a template for future grant applications, enhancing our research funding processes.

# ADVANCEMENTS AND INSIGHTS IN RESEARCH

## AUSTRALIAN DEMENTIA RESEARCH FORUM RECAP

The Australian Dementia Research Forum (ADRF2024), held from June 3-5 on the Gold Coast, Queensland, brought together leading dementia researchers, healthcare professionals, policymakers, and people living with dementia.

This year's theme, "Turning the Tide on Dementia," highlighted ground breaking innovations and challenged perceptions of living with or caring for someone with dementia.

The forum served as a hub for global experts to share the latest in dementia research, care, and policy. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions opened the event, offering healthcare professionals insights into dementia risk reduction, deprescribing, anti-amyloid therapies, and support for care partners.

ARA CEO Professor Vicky Vass emphasised the significance of the forum, noting its role in advancing Alzheimer's detection, prevention, and treatment. The ARA team actively contributed, chairing sessions, presenting research, and fostering discussions on future collaborations.



**ARA Research Team - Australian Dementia Research Forum**

The forum showcased Australia's leadership in dementia research, with presentations by esteemed experts, including ARA Director of Research, Professor Ralph Martins, and Professor Colin Masters, a member of the ARA Board.

ADRF2024 continued to foster collaboration and innovation, solidifying Australia's commitment to improving the lives of those affected by dementia.

## ALCOA TAKES ACTION FOR ALZHEIMER'S

Alcoa has long had a culture of giving back to the communities in which it operates through its community partnerships, employee volunteering and employee giving programs.

In May, a team of Alcoa employees braved a crisp Sunday morning in support of ARA and Perth's HBF Run for a Reason.

Affectionately known as the Alcoa Forget Me Nots, the team pounded the pavement to complete the 12-kilometre run, and in doing so earned ARA a \$3,000 Alcoans Coming Together in Our Neighbourhood (ACTION) employee volunteering grant, funded by the Alcoa Foundation.

Alcoa's employee giving program, PEACH—Personnel Employed at Alcoa Charity Help—has also recently lent its support. PEACH collects regular payroll donations from Alcoa employees and distributes them to worthy Western Australian charities and community organisations.

In late 2023, PEACH donated \$12,300 to purchase an additional element for the BMG VANTastar microplate reader which allows for quicker sample analysis. Funds were also provided in support of our Testosterone study.



**Corporate Affairs, Community Relations and Government Affairs colleagues: Jodie Read, Rebecca Miniken, Georgia Haines, Jane McGuire, Simon Shepherdson, Cameron Fraser, Georgia Raven and Cheri Tiglias, and Ian Tiglias from Pinjarra Refinery.**



# NEW HOPE FOR ALZHEIMER'S

## LECANEMAB AND DONANEMAB UNDER REVIEW

Two ground breaking Alzheimer's treatments, Lecanemab and Donanemab, are currently under review by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

These innovative drugs are designed to slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease by targeting amyloid-beta plaques in the brain, a key factor in cognitive decline.

If approved, Lecanemab and Donanemab could become the first disease-modifying treatments available in Australia, offering new hope to patients and their families. These drugs have shown potential in clinical trials to delay the progression of Alzheimer's, possibly helping patients maintain their cognitive function and independence for a longer period.

However, the introduction of these treatments comes with challenges. Access and affordability will be critical issues, as the high cost of these therapies could limit their availability. Additionally, possible side effects such as brain swelling and microhaemorrhages will require careful management.



### LEQEMBI could be the first disease-modifying drug approved for Alzheimer's disease in Australia

ARA is at the forefront of this important work. The CTD is currently participating in a study using Donanemab called TRAILBLAZER-ALZ5, sponsored by pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly. This trial is focused on evaluating the safety and effectiveness of Donanemab in slowing mild Alzheimer's progression. The CTD team continues to run the Lecanemab trials, ClarityAD and the preclinical study AHEAD3-45 which have been ongoing for several years.

If you're interested in contributing to this vital research or learning more about the clinical trials running, please contact our team at (08) 9389 6433 or email [aarfctd@alzheimersresearch.org.au](mailto:aarfctd@alzheimersresearch.org.au).

Your participation could help bring new treatments to those who need them most.

**Whether it's \$2 or \$200,000, any donation to Alzheimer's Research Australia makes a difference.**

**DONATE TODAY**

## INTERN SPOTLIGHT

I am currently completing the McCusker Internship as part of my final year in the Bachelor of Psychology program at The University of Western Australia.

I chose ARA to apply my psychology knowledge and learn more about Alzheimer's disease, which has personally affected my family. I'm developing a resource to improve data collection and feedback from research participants, aiming to enhance ARA's data practices and benefit future studies.

This internship has provided valuable insights into Alzheimer's research and the critical role of clinical trials. Working with ARA's dedicated team has been a rewarding experience, and I'm grateful for their support and welcome.



McCusker Intern - Inez Tang

# 2024 AAIC

ARA had a strong presence at the 2024 Alzheimer's Association International Conference, with several of our leading researchers presenting ground breaking work in dementia research.

The global event in Philadelphia brought together experts to share the latest advancements in detection, treatment, and care.

The ARA team participated in key sessions, sparking collaborations with international researchers. We are proud to support our researchers as they contribute to the fight against dementia on the world stage!



## ROYAL PERTH GOLF CLUB EVENT RAISES \$64,465

We are thrilled to have been the designated charity for the Royal Perth Golf Club Charity Golf Day, which exceeded all expectations by raising an impressive \$64,465!

The event started with a scenic bike ride along the river, offering 10km, 15km, or 30km routes. Participants then enjoyed a delightful lunch at the club before 48 golfers hit the greens.

The evening's gala dinner, attended by around 80 guests, featured speeches from our Director of Research, Professor Ralph Martins, AO and CEO, Professor Vicky Vass. They shared insights on Alzheimer's advancements and the importance of community support.

This success highlights the power of community spirit and collaboration. Thanks to the generous contributions from club members, families, friends, and Rotary clubs from Melville, Dalkeith, Belmont,



Royal Perth Golf Club Fundraiser 2024

and Como, we are closer to advancing Alzheimer's research and supporting those affected by the disease.

## DONATE TODAY

Whether it's \$2 or \$200,000, any funding Alzheimer's Research Australia receives makes a difference. Your special gift has a direct impact on driving advancements in Alzheimer's research. Donate securely on our website or use the donation slip enclosed with this newsletter.

