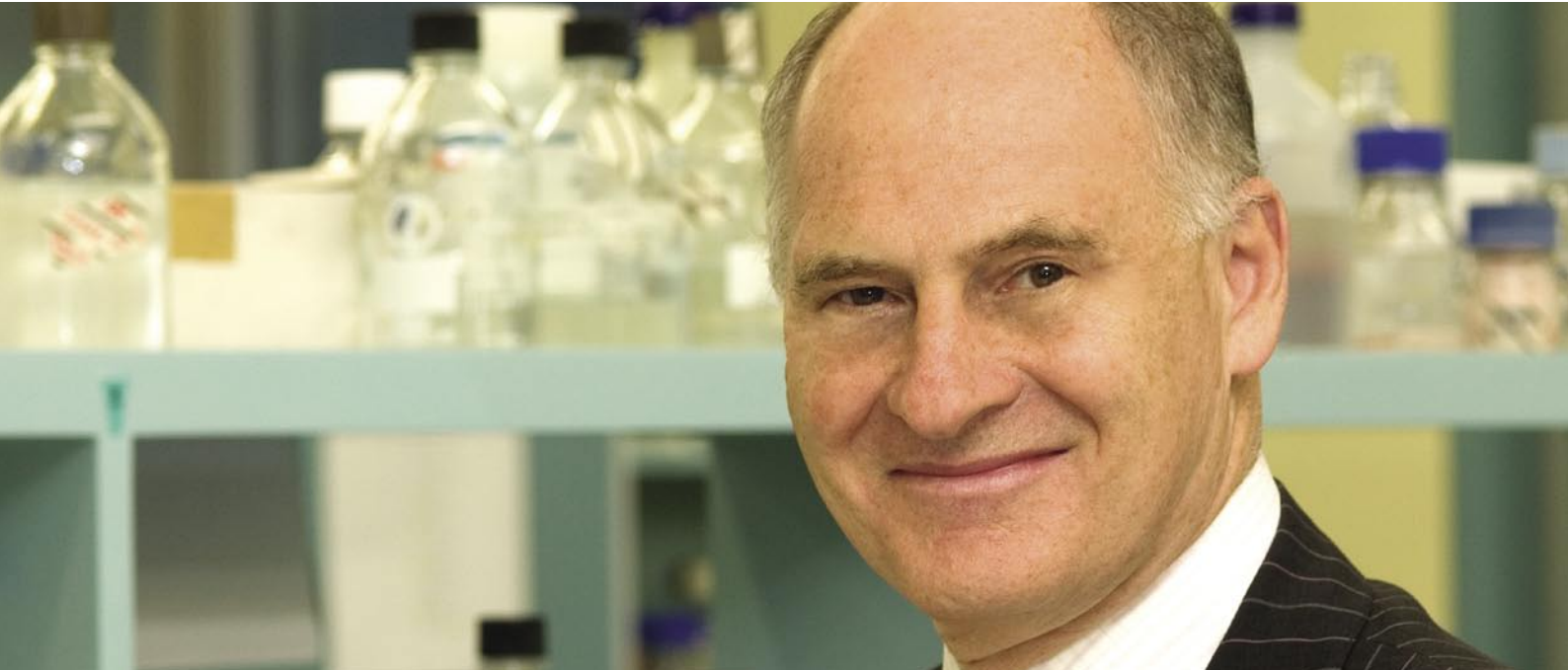


LUMINESCENT

Newsletter of the Centenary Institute of Cancer Medicine and Cell Biology



Welcome

The most exciting news at Centenary is the appointment of our new Director, Professor Mathew Vadas. Read all about Professor Vadas and the other scientists who will be joining him on page 4.

We had another successful Race Day, which raised \$160,000 for research (page 2) and several ground breaking developments from our research teams (page 4).

Thank you for your enthusiastic and positive feedback about our new newsletter, we appreciate your comments and hope you will continue to enjoy reading about the research and the people who make it all happen at the Centenary Institute. Your continued support is warmly appreciated by all of us.

Nick Pearce & Pearly Harumal, Editors

In the News

New Director

On November 28 the Hon Michael Egan announced the appointment of Centenary's new Director, Professor Mathew Vadas. Prof Vadas comes from the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science in Adelaide, where he was Director of the Division of Human Immunology. He is a physician and scientist. He is one of the most highly cited workers in biomedical science in Australia and has considerable management experience having been central to the founding of the Hansen Centre for Cancer Research (now the Hansen Institute) and two ASX listed biotechnology companies.

When things go wrong...

Sometimes our immune system just doesn't know when something is normal and when it is not. Usually it patrols our body hunting out signs of infection before problems occur. Occasionally, it becomes 'short-sighted' and begins to attack our own cells as if they were some kind of lethal invader. Writing in the prestigious Immunology In The News magazine A/P Barbara Fazekas de St Groth described the discovery of a new way to identify those parts of the immune system called 'regulatory T cells' which appear to be able to block our immune system from launching an attack on our own cells. It's a finding that may help people suffering from asthma, diabetes, inflammatory bowel disease, other autoimmune diseases, allergies, HIV and cancer.

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**CENTENARY
INSTITUTE**



In the News continued

Hidden risks that are difficult to spot

When a 14 year old boy collapses playing football with his friends, something must be wrong. Like most health problems, the answer is often found lurking inside our genes; the molecules found in all of our cells that make us the way we are. The story (covered by The Sun Herald and ABC news' Sophie Scott) drew attention to Centenary Institute's Associate Professor Chris Semsarian whose Molecular Cardiology Group has been working on the genes blamed for the sudden deaths of apparently healthy and active young kids. According to Chris the problem, hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, the scientific term for thickening of the heart muscle, is caused by mistakes in the genes responsible for heart muscle. What Chris has shown is that people who have more than one mistake (something scientists call a double mutation) are at increased risk of sudden cardiac death and will develop a more severe form of the disease.

Stem Cell Research

Professor John Rasko (Gene & Stem Cell Therapy Group) was quoted in the Spring 2006 issue of PathWay, the Newsletter of the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia. The article examined the stances on embryo stem cell research taken by governments in the USA, Singapore and Australia, in particular Singapore's proactive stance.

Liver white blood cell communications

Dr Patrick Bertolino's research (Liver Immunology Group) received media coverage in the Sydney Morning Herald on 9 November 2006. The new research findings describe how white blood cells are able to 'hold hands' or attach themselves to liver cells through tiny openings in the walls of the millions of blood vessels that run through the liver. This contact between the liver and white blood cells gives researchers a clearer understanding of how the liver protects us against diseases such as hepatitis C and how we can target disease during its early stages. This work was published in the prestigious Journal of Hepatology and was done in collaboration with colleagues at Concord Hospital.

Spying technology helps scientists look inside living cells

Just as spy satellites have changed the way governments view the earth, imaging systems like the Bioluminescent Imaging System IVIS-100, recently purchased and installed at the Centenary Institute, has transformed the way scientists look inside individual living cells. Its secret lies in its ultra-sensitive camera, which can take pictures inside diseased cells enabling scientists to see what happens when treatments are given. It means experiments, which were once impossible can now be performed. The machine is the first of its kind in any research institute in NSW and was featured in the University of Sydney's September Newsletter.



Left: ABC News Health Reporter Sophie Scott interviewing A/Prof Chris Semsarian

Young Wine Maker of the Year Award Dinner raises \$8,000

The Wine Society celebrated its 60th birthday with its 6th annual Young Wine Maker of the Year Award Dinner at the Westin Hotel on 25 November 2006. Centenary was the nominated 'charity of choice' for the 5th year, with the event raising almost \$8,000.

The evening was a great success with fabulous food surpassed by wine from some of Australia's best young wine makers. During

the evening attendees were entertained by MC Simone Thurtell from the ABC's Grandstand program, the SCEGGS string ensemble, the Wine Society's own James Roser and Australian Idol Finalist Bobby Flynn.

Congratulations to the Young Wine Maker of the Year Emma Wood of Seppelt Great Western and the Members Choice winner Justin Coates of Step Rd.



Ms Emma Wood (Seppelt Great Western) with Wine Society CEO John Winstanley



Research Society members Mr Reg English and Mrs Shirley O'Shea



Mr Jeff Melrose (MMB Print) and Ms Eva Gero (The Wine Society) enjoy the festivities of the day



MC A/Prof Chris Semsarian and guest speaker Ms Liz Jones

Centenary Events

13th Annual Race Day and Luncheon raises \$160,000 for cancer and heart disease

Centenary celebrated its 13th Annual Race Day on Saturday 28 October 2006 at Rosehill Gardens Racecourse.

Master of Ceremonies A/Prof Chris Semsarian (Molecular Cardiology Group) did a superb job at keeping guests entertained and raising awareness of heart disease and cancer research at Centenary. A healthy person drops dead for no obvious reason. The heart stops beating without any warning. This is known as sudden cardiac death. The disease is caused by mistakes in patients genes. It affects 50,000 Australians each year and it's the focus of Chris'

research. Guest speaker Liz Jones (a patient of Chris') shared her touching story of how sudden cardiac death robbed her family of a loving brother and how through Chris' research she was given a second chance at life. She has a defibrillator implanted. It restarts her heart if it stops beating properly. Liz recounted the episode of when the machine restarted her heart. "It was an incredible feeling to have that kind of back up. I was in the office alone. Without the machine the attack could have been fatal". Chris' research is working on what triggers the heart to malfunction and how to prevent the disease developing in people with the defective genes.

Special thanks to our corporate sponsors

- Aussie Mastercard
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- MMB Print
- Regional Radioworks
- The Wine Society

Thank you to the organisers, volunteers, and guests who by their presence contributed to a very special and memorable day. The event raised more than \$160,000 for medical research. Further information on this year's Race Day can be found on page 7.



Guests were entertained by the enchanting music of the Bellissima ensemble





New skills at the Centenary Institute

Cancer...Vascular Biology...Diabetes...

Medical students were taught not so many years ago that the chief disease causing processes in the body were "inflammation", "malignant change", "degeneration and senescence", and each of these processes formed isolated units of study.

One of the chief realisations of the last 10 years has been the essential interplay between these, often seemingly contrasting and disparate processes.

Whilst the work of our three new scientists came from an absolute curiosity about what drives the inflammatory process, their discoveries have been highly relevant towards discovering new therapeutics against cancer, the understanding of the function of blood vessels both from the points of view of vascular disease and cancer, and finally extend with significant insights to the metabolic illnesses like diabetes.

Professor Mathew Vadas, a Hungarian migrant, was educated as a physician at Sydney University and at the Royal North Shore

and Prince Alfred Hospitals. With a PhD in immunology from the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, Melbourne, he headed off to Harvard Medical School, where he made some seminal contributions to diseases of the third world, chiefly the helminthic parasitic illness of schistosomiasis. In trying to apply some of the paradigms from worms to other illnesses he headed off, with Professor Gamble, to Seattle where they made a major discovery about the drivers of inflammation at the level of the blood vessel, a discovery that underlies much of the modern therapeutic approaches to inflammatory diseases. He returned to Australia, founded the Hanson Centre for Cancer Research in Adelaide, whilst continuing his focus on the role of blood vessels in disease.

Professor Jennifer Gamble, a true-blue Aussie, a graduate of RMIT obtained her PHD from the University of Adelaide, is now one of the best known vascular biologists in Australia, with a major interest in the formation of new blood vessels- a process known as angiogenesis. Her skills are at putting together mini-organs

in the test tube from their component cells. For example cells lining the blood vessels-so called endothelial cells-can actually make membranes resistant to the passage of liquids, or tubes resembling blood vessels. The dissection of these processes has yielded surprising results. One recent example is the isolation of a gene involved in ageing-or senescence. It appears-as indicated in the introduction- that senescence is involved in preventing cancer growth. This is a hot area in her research, and one that gives us all hope that the ageing process is potentially useful.

Associate Professor Pu Xia is a medical graduate from China who specialised in endocrinology before going to Harvard and working at the prestigious Joslin Center for Diabetes Research. After joining Professors Vadas and Gamble in Adelaide, he made a major discovery about the wiring of endothelial (and indeed cancer) cells. This discovery led to 10 years of intensive research and a growth from a few people to as many as 30 interested in the fine details of this wiring process, the central player of which is an enzyme called sphingosine kinase.

Awards and Achievements

Congratulations to the following Centenary students and scientists for their outstanding achievements over the last few months.

Mr Brendan Lee of the Animal Facility was awarded a prize for Best Scientific Poster at the Australian and New Zealand Society for Laboratory Animal Science (ANZSLAS) Conference in Canberra in September 2006. Brendan's poster described the dental problems observed in mice with deficient immune systems and the special things we can do to care for them.

PhD student Ms Keryn Lucas (Cancer Drug Resistance Group) was awarded a Cancer Institute NSW Research Scholar Award for

her research investigating the ways malignant melanoma (skin cancer) cells are able to become resistant to anti-cancer drugs.

Dr Silvia Ling (Cancer Drug Resistance Group) received an International Myeloma Foundation (IMF) Junior Research Award for her PhD studies. Dr Ling was invited to attend the IMF's Annual Scientific Advisors Dinner in Orlando, Florida, USA in December to accept her award.

Dr Lye Lin Ho (Cancer Drug Resistance Group) was awarded a Basser Research Entry

Scholarship 2007 from The Royal Australasian College of Physicians for her Postgraduate studies on the link between genes involved in cancer and its resistance to drugs used during treatment.

Dr Fiona Warner (Liver Immunobiology Group) was awarded a University of Sydney Research & Development grant for her project entitled "The role of biliary epithelial to mesenchymal transition (EMT) in liver fibrosis".



Chairman's Luncheon

The Centenary Institute inaugural Chairman's Luncheon was held in September 2006 at The Observatory Hotel. Hosted by the Hon Michael Egan, Guest Speaker A/Prof Chris Semsarian (Head of Centenary's Molecular Cardiology Group) captivated an audience of influential business leaders with his presentation on heart disease and the impact of environmental issues on our health. Guests were honoured by the presence of Mrs Janette Howard. The luncheon provides an opportunity for business leaders to learn more about the the rearch performed at Centenary.

Corporate Support

Centenary is grateful for the tremendous support from individuals and corporate partners. Without this, our mission of improving the health and quality of life for all Australians would be impossible.

Guidant Australia \$35,000

A/Prof Chris Semsarian (Molecular Cardiology) received a grant of \$35,000 from Guidant Australia. Guidant design and produce cardiovascular devices including pacemakers and defibrillators.

Perpetual Trustees \$50,000

Dr Chris Jolly (B Cell), Dr John Allen (Cancer Drug Resistance), A/Prof Chris Semsarian (Molecular Cardiology), Prof Warwick Britton and Dr Bernadette Saunders (Mycobacterial Research) received a \$50,000 equipment grant from Perpetual Trustees.

The generosity of our corporate supporters is crucial in providing our scientists with the edge needed to forge ahead in our search for answers. We are grateful for your continued loyalty.



Dr John Allen (far left), Dr Chris Jolly (2nd from right) and Dr Bernadette Saunders (far right) with representatives from Perpetual Trustees

Inghams \$50,000 – why we “love ‘em”

Inghams Enterprises, a multifaceted company in the food industry with poultry production at the core of the business, recently made a generous donation of \$50,000 towards Centenary’s medical research and have vowed to donate another \$100,000 over the next two years. Inghams have been a loyal supporter for many years, providing Race Day sponsorship since 1994. Mr Robert Ingham (Managing Director) has been a Member of the Research Society since 1992.

“We are delighted to be the recipient of continuous support from one of Australia’s leading companies such as Inghams” said Prof Mathew Vadas



Researcher Profile – Dr Fiona Warner

Dr Fiona Warner began her research career as a Bachelor of Applied Science student at the University of Western Sydney.

After her PhD on the structural activity of a new protein receptor (recognition molecule) found on smooth muscles of the intestine and bladder, Fiona was awarded a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) CJ Martin Research Training Fellowship. This grant gives young scientists the opportunity to study for two years overseas before returning to Australia to complete their research. Fiona worked at the University of Leeds, UK, where she was part of the group which discovered Angiotensin Converting Enzyme II (ACE2), a protein which is involved in heart and kidney function, as well as being a receptor for the SARS virus. The severe acute respiratory syndrome virus causes flu like symptoms in infected patients. In 2003 Fiona returned to Australia to complete her Fellowship at the Baker Heart Research Institute and Monash University in Melbourne.

Fiona joined the Centenary’s Liver Immunobiology Group in 2006 where she was awarded a grant from the NHMRC and Rolf Edgar Lake Research Fellowship from the University of Sydney to study the role of ACE2 in liver injury.

Describe your research...

My main research is on a protein called ACE2 protein, which is able to break down a hormone called Angiotensin II. Briefly, Angiotensin II is best known for regulating blood pressure by constricting blood vessels and controlling the body’s water/salt balance. In recent years it has been shown to be involved in liver disease such as liver fibrosis. The enzyme ACE2, breaks down angiotensin II and by doing so could stop liver disease occurring.

What impact will this have on society and community health?

Fibrosis (cirrhosis) of the liver was once thought to be incurable. It happens in 2000 Australians each year. Our research seems to suggest that ACE2 might play a protective role by controlling the amount of angiotensin II in liver disease. By understanding the role of ACE2 it will allow us to design more effective forms of treatment for fibrotic diseases.

What do you hope to achieve?

I would hope to be involved in research that will ultimately reverse or stop fibrosis occurring. It would mean people suffering from liver disease such as cirrhosis would be treated, rather than undergoing organ transplantation, which is currently the only option for treatment.



Why did you join Centenary?

The Liver Immunobiology laboratory at Centenary has a great mix of scientists. The research in this laboratory ranges from basic research (like studying how enzymes work) through to treating patients with liver disease and undergoing liver transplantation.

What has been the highlight of your career?

A highlight for me as scientist was when I was in the 2nd year of my PhD candidature (1998), I was approached by the Italian pharmaceutical company, Menarini SpA, to develop a test for the human tachykinin NK2 receptor. I deferred my PhD for 6 months and worked in Florence, Italy, which was fantastic experience.

What do you love most about your work?

I enjoy being part of such an exciting project and having the opportunity to work with scientists both here and overseas.

Getting to know you – Member Profile



Dr Schwinghamer has been a member of the Research Society since 1994.

Q. Why did you become a member of the Research Society?

A. I joined the society because I was a career research scientist and loved research but after retiring in 1983 felt I still had a role to play in financially supporting other scientists' research. In recent years it's become more important; as an 86-year-old with prostate cancer and wife with Parkinson's disease, supporting medical research has taken on another meaning.

Given its importance, our Government spends very little on medical research. Instead most of our Institutes are dependent on voluntary contributions. I was lucky, I grew up in the post-WWII "golden era" of scientific research (esp. in the US) but can appreciate the problems young scientists experience today.

Q. What would you say to people who are thinking of supporting medical research?

I would say "Go for it!" It's easy to think about other things in life when you are younger. Ill health seems years away but eventually health problems become an **inescapable reality**. As a Nation, our efforts to confront ill health should be a top priority.

Q. Can you tell us a little bit more about yourself?

A. Briefly, I am a dual citizen (Aust/US), as are my wife and 3 children—all here in Oz now. I grew up on a farm in Minnesota (US), served with the US Airforce in the Pacific area (briefly in Oz) in WWII, completed my university education at the University of Minnesota (PhD, Science), employed in agricultural research and atomic energy research (mutation in microorganisms) at several locations in the US. Then a 3-year research fellowship with CSIRO in the 1960's, back to the US (Oregon State University) for a few years and finally back to Canberra (I missed Oz) with CSIRO in the 1970's to round out my research career (microbial genetics). My wife and I enjoyed sports, travel, etc. in post-retirement years until recently when curtailed by health matters. I still follow science via science magazines, play the keyboard a bit, and spend considerable time on the internet chasing the latest info on health problems - especially in the area of cancer and neurological illnesses - relevant to ourselves as well as family and some friends with specific problems.

Thank you Dr Schwinghamer. If you would like to share your experiences with other luminesCent readers please phone the Research Society office on 02 9565 6100.

"I am a strong supporter of medical research. Without it, diseases that were once common would still be the cause of much human suffering.

Government funding is clearly inadequate, considering the cost of research and the many diseases/illnesses still confronting us,"

Dr Erwin Schwinghamer



Grants Awarded 2007

- NHMRC Program Grant – A/Prof Barbara Fazekas de St.Groth with collaborators from ANU and The Garvan Institute
- NHMRC Project Grants - Dr Nick West (Mycobacterial Research), Dr Patrick Bertolino & Dr Alex Bishop (Liver Immunobiology)
- Heart Foundation Grant - Prof Jenny Gamble (Vascular Biology)
- Australian Centre for HIV and Hepatitis Virology Research Grant – Dr Nick Shackel (Liver Immunobiology)



Dr Nick West, A/Prof Barbara Fazekas de St.Groth, Prof Jenny Gamble and Dr Patrick Bertolino

Where are they now?



Dr Lynn Poulton joined Centenary in 1997 as an Honours student and continued on to complete her PhD in 2002 working on diabetes research.

Lynn is now working as a Research Scientist at The Sir William Dunn School of Pathology, Oxford University in the UK.

What are you currently working on?

I'm working on some proteins, which are part of the Tumour Necrosis Factor (TNF) family.

TNFs help our immune system work well and have a major part to play in the rejection of transplants. They also seem to play a part in destroying cancer cells and are the chief culprit in the destruction of healthy cells in patients with diabetes, arthritis and other autoimmune diseases.

My research is looking at how we might be able to alter TNFs to help stop transplanted tissues (like kidney transplants) from being rejected. If we can find a way of making this happen, it would mean transplant patients would no longer have to take immunosuppressive drugs. In the short term we are hopeful that we might be able to reduce the amount of immunosuppressive drugs patients need to take to stop their transplant being rejected.

Describe your typical day at work?

It's never typical! But that makes it enjoyable.

What do you enjoy most about your work?

I sometimes find all that bench-work very tedious. What I really like is getting all the

experimental results together and trying to understand how everything works

What do you miss most about Centenary and living in Australia?

There's so much I miss about living in Australia, I'm not even sure where to start. Friends and family of course, the climate, the beach, good cheap restaurants, fresh seafood, being able to drive for more than a couple of hundred kilometres in most directions without falling off the edge.

From the Centenary, I miss the really good sense of camaraderie and great friends.

What valuable lessons did you learn about life as a scientist while you were a student?

Important lesson number 1 - most of everything doesn't work...that's why they call it "research".

Which goes on to important lesson number 2 - you need a fairly optimistic outlook and loads of perseverance. Also, it's very useful to be within easy walking distance of a really good coffee shop (ah yes, another thing I miss).

Race Day 2007

This year's 14th Annual Race Day & Luncheon will be held at the Rosehill Garden's Racecourse on **Saturday 27 October**. Early bird bookings are accepted now. To book your seats please contact the Research Society Office on 02 9565 6100 or visit our website at www.centenary.org.au

Centenary Welcomes

2007 promises to be an exciting year for Centenary with the recruitment of Professors Mathew Vadas, Jennifer Gamble and Wolfgang Weninger, Associate Professor Pu Xia and Dr Ryuichi Aikawa.

Professors Vadas and Gamble and Associate Professor Xia have relocated from the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science, Adelaide. Read more about their research on page 4.

Professor Wolfgang Weninger joins Centenary in June from the prestigious Wistar Institute in Philadelphia USA. He received his medical training from the University of Vienna. Wolfgang will be

leading research into how white blood cells are able to invade and destroy cancers. By using the latest techniques in microscopy Wolfgang hopes to pinpoint how white blood cells that travel from the blood stream into cancers are able to destroy cancer cells some of the time but fail all too often.

Dr Ryuichi Aikawa currently at Tufts University, Boston Massachusetts USA, will join Centenary in late March. Ryuichi's research will be using gene therapy to treat heart disease. He received his medical training in Cardiology at the University of Tokyo and has spent the last six years researching heart disease in Boston.

Centenary Colloquium

On 30 January Centenary hosted its inaugural Centenary Colloquium on "Opportunities in microRNA research". The scientific meeting brought experts from across Australia to the Institute to present work on the latest trends and emerging technological advances in the field of non-coding RNAs-small molecules that were once ignored but now seem to play a part in development and cancer. In particular the relevance of microRNA to cancer medicine and cell biology. Organisers of the event Prof Mathew Vadas, Dr Greg Goodall and Prof John Rasko said the event was a spectacular success.

If you are interested in attending Centenary's next Colloquium please contact us on 02 9565 6100.

2006 Christmas Appeal

We gratefully acknowledge the generous contributions by the following supporters to our 2006 Christmas Appeal. A total of \$21,970 was raised for the *Centenary Young Researcher Prizes* to support the work of some of our students and junior Postdoctoral Scientists.

This list excludes donors who wish to remain anonymous.

Miss June Andrew	Mrs Nancy Denniss	Mrs NE Grant	Mr Ian Manton	Mr J D St John
Mr M Arnulphy	in loving memory of her	Mr Claudio Giovenco	Mr Blair A Marshall	Mr & Mrs F & A Stamp
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Message from the Director



Dear Supporters of the Centenary,

Medical research is becoming an increasingly vital part of all our lives. The discoveries in disease prevention and therapy have prolonged our productive lifespans and we are increasingly able to tailor medicines to benefit the individual.

To head an Institute such as Centenary Institute of Cancer Medicine and Cell Biology is thus an enormous honour. Centenary is a highly esteemed and well established centre of Medical Research that is poised for its next phase of growth and intensification of its collaborations across the campus.

There is no doubt that there is considerable work ahead for all of us. I do not believe that the community is sufficiently aware of the excellence and impact of the work in the Centenary, nor of the support it needs for its continual growth. I am also determined to add to the already superb skills at the Centenary in such a way as to add significantly to the depth of expertise campus-wide.

Finally I believe that the Centenary should be a meeting place where medical care and research intersect and give birth to new ideas that drive our future. To this end we have begun to organise Colloquia on cutting edge topics and also larger scale events to encourage fellowship.

I look forward to communicating regularly with you, and hope that you will be as proud of our achievements as we are of your support.

Professor Mathew Vadas

Honour Roll 2006 Apologies

We would like to apologise to the following Research Society Members for failing to acknowledge their contribution in our October 2006 luminesCent Honour Roll

- Mr Terry Oliver (Member since 1992)
- Miss Marguerita Rotcas (Member since 1992)
- Mr & Mrs RW & JA Ibbotson (Members since 1994)
- Mrs Margaret A Gray (Member since 1995)
- Mr Syd J Cashman (Member since 1995)

We try our best to ensure that we fittingly acknowledge the generous support of our members who do not wish to remain anonymous. If we fail to include your name in our Honour Roll it is an unintentional oversight.

Please contact the Research Society Office on 9565 6100.

In Memoriam

Our sincere appreciation to those who donated gifts in memory of **Mrs Marjorie Barker**.

Bequests

Thanks to bequests, Centenary has been able to continue growing as a centre of excellence in medical research. By leaving a bequest to the Centenary Institute Medical Research Foundation your support guarantees our scientists can continue their invaluable research to find cures for the diseases that all too often strike those we love.

If you would like more information please contact the Research Society Office on 02 9565 6100.

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