

Understanding DISEASE... Finding a CURE

DR NICK PEARCE



Dr Nick Pearce has learnt that life probably won't take you on the path you initially expected. As Chief Operating Officer at Centenary, Nick is responsible for, in his words, "anything which doesn't directly come under science." But growing up, Nick never thought he'd find himself where he is now.

In fact, Nick dreamed of becoming a vet. But when he finished school, he admits he was "a little at sea" when he didn't receive a high enough mark to qualify for the degree. Instead, he studied science at university with the hope of eventually transferring into veterinary studies.

But when was Nick finally accepted into vet, his primary PhD supervisor proposed the opportunity of a lifetime – to complete his PhD at Stanford University.

"I chatted to one of my honours-year lecturers about it, and he said, 'I know the answer. If you really wanted to do vet, you wouldn't be contemplating doing other things. [Vet] is no longer your dream.' I realised my dream was to now finish the PhD at Stanford."

After working in the US for a few years, Nick returned to Australia where he started at the newly-formed Centenary Institute in 1991 as a post-doctorate researcher in bladder cancer. But his career was about to take another unexpected turn.

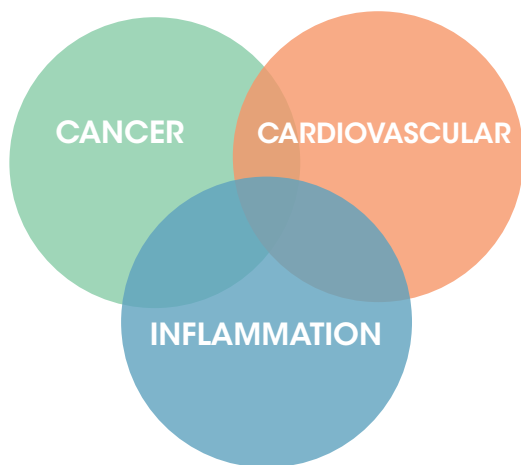
"I discovered that while I really liked science, I didn't want to be a bench scientist. I was incredibly fortunate I came back when our Inaugural Director, Professor Tony Basten AO, was building Centenary. We decided the best option was to give me extra tasks that would help me slowly transition away from the bench and into the business of science."

Since then, Nick has had stints in commercialisation and grants, on top of completing an MBA. After taking on the role of Acting General Manager in 2005, he was appointed to his current position of COO in 2007.

Nick's key advice is to be open to opportunities, because there are so many diverse roles for scientists outside the lab – whether that be in commercialisation, science communication, or even as an analyst in an investment bank. "A PhD gives you certain skills which you can take into a totally different field. What a PhD gives you more than anything else is critical thinking."

As for what Nick enjoys outside Centenary? "Oh, that's easy – anything in the water. Surfing, swimming, snorkelling and diving."

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?



CANCER

Cancer is a disease of the cells, which are the body's basic building blocks.

1 in 3 women and 1 in 2 men will be diagnosed with cancer by the age of 85.

INFLAMMATION

Inflammation is the body's natural response to protect itself against harm. There are two types: acute and chronic.

1 in 9 Australians have asthma, around 2.5 million people.

CARDIOVASCULAR

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) is a collective term for diseases of the heart and blood vessels.

Almost 1 in 3 deaths in Australia in 2015 were due to cardiovascular disease.

Together we are the solution...together we can save lives.