

# MEDIA RELEASE

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***Franklin Women's Mentoring Program* gives promising female scientists the confidence to rise to the top**



The Inaugural Franklin Women's Mentoring Program has given our most promising young female scientists the opportunity, confidence and knowledge to rise to the top of their fields and a competitive edge in the industry. The program creates opportunities for networking, personal and professional development and career progression for mid-career female researchers, by matching them with leading male and female mentors for a period of six months, to identify their key strengths, and to gain a clear perspective of the career possibilities available to them.

Mentee Dr Emma Zhang, a Centenary Institute researcher, says the support was life-changing, "Thanks to the Franklin Women's Mentoring Program, I now have the confidence and courage to find my own path. During the program, I discovered my signature strengths and how to carve a career path which works to my strengths. This has also become a great opportunity for networking and collaboration."

Many of Australia's most established female scientists have navigated their careers as the only woman in the laboratory. Whilst the proportion of girls and young women in science is generally greater than men at the early stages on their careers, most women do not go on to reach senior roles at the same rate as their male counterparts – often due to a taking time out of their careers to start a family. This is something the inaugural Franklin Women's Mentoring Program, in collaboration with Serendis, is determined to change.

Feedback from mentees reveals the experience has enabled women to see a clear path to leadership in their industry, "I was no longer the girl who was shy and did not know what she wants. Now I have clear objectives to work towards to build my own career path," said Dr Zhang.

Centenary's Dr Devanshi Seth, Head of the Alcoholic Liver Disease Program and member of the Franklin Women's peer advisory committee says, "It was not only the mentees who benefited from the program but the mentors gained much more than they expected from the experience of helping up-and-coming researchers". Dr Seth received feedback that the mentors also said that "they will take back an enriched experience through this mentoring program on identifying ways to support women to progress to leadership in their organisation. Mentees reported back that they gained a clear perspective about the bigger picture in pursuing their overall career," said Dr Seth.

Centenary Institute's Chief Operating Officer, Dr Nick Pearce, was able to pass on his experience and skills as a mentor, "I was honoured to be part of the inaugural Franklin Women Mentoring Program. In addition, to learning from each other, the mentor and mentee received structured guidance. As with any mentoring, it is always great to assist younger researchers develop, to learn new skills and reflect on the health and medical research sector's strengths, weakness and opportunities. Franklin Women are to be congratulated for establishing the program and my thanks to them and Centenary for giving me the opportunity to be part of an inspiring program."

At the final event for participants, the group was joined by the New South Wales Minister for Women, The Hon. Tanya Davies, who praised the program for its unique nature, especially in the health and medical research sector - connecting cross-organisational mentees with mentors.

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