



Best foot forward for fun and fitness

The rain threatened, but that wasn't going to stop us! Almost 50 Menzies staff and students participated in this year's B&E Hobart Run the Bridge. We were thrilled to be the Charity

of Choice for this year's event and would like to thank everyone who not only participated but also made a donation to Menzies. **More pictures inside.**

Research today for vision tomorrow

As 2015 came to an end Menzies celebrated outstanding success in the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) rankings. Menzies and the University of Tasmania were ranked "well above world standard" for clinical sciences, neurosciences, human movement and sports science and ophthalmology and optometry.

We're building on this success, and right now our current appeal is centred on our ophthalmology research, which looks into genetic connections in glaucoma, diabetic ocular complications, corneal diseases and congenital cataract.

We have the personnel, tools and expertise, which could pre-emptively eradicate "genetically defined" blindness, but we need your urgent support to continue and expand this work.

You have made a difference

What a wonderful result from our last appeal, which sought your help for research into motor neuron disease. Congratulations – at last count the MND appeal had raised almost \$45,000. This support will help us make significant inroads into understanding the cause of MND.

Under the lead of Associate Professor Tracey Dickson, our research will determine whether changes to particular nerve cells known as 'interneurons' could be a trigger for motor neuron dysfunction and cell death in the brain and spinal cord, causing MND.

If our experiments prove to be correct, existing drug treatments for related diseases could be rapidly re-purposed for use in the treatment of MND.

Donate to our Autumn appeal at www.menzies.utas.edu.au/donatetoday or call 6226 4230.

Director's message



Professor Alison Venn

Welcome to the 2016 Menzies Autumn Bulletin

One of the many exciting things about becoming Director at Menzies is that it opens up opportunities to converse with the Tasmanian community.

You are no doubt aware that our work here grows from the community – we research the illnesses that most affect Tasmanians and we draw on your generosity for research participation, volunteering and donations to our research, which comprise a significant proportion of our funding. I know from my own background as a Population Health researcher that the health challenges we have in Tasmania are many and complex, but I also know that these problems will only be solved together. As Director of Menzies I will ensure that our research responds to the community's priorities, as well as being guided by health sector professionals and informed by our national and international collaborations.

The Bulletin is just one way that we try to stay in touch with you, to deliver information back to you about our latest projects, our success stories, and also to highlight and say thank you for the many acts of generosity from the community that enrich our working lives at Menzies.

I am delighted to be in the position to guide the organisation, which, after 28 years, has both youth and experience, a proud history and an exciting future. For me, the partnership with the Tasmanian community is the key to that future.

I hope you enjoy the Autumn Bulletin.

Regards,

Professor Alison Venn
Director

Long life tip: go outside and exercise with friends

Participating in the B&E Hobart Run the Bridge fits perfectly with the Menzies Top Ten Tips for a long and healthy life, encouraging people of all ages to get outside and exercise in an enjoyable way with family and friends.

One of the things we were most proud of on the day was the involvement of Menzies volunteers, who kept the water coming for all the runners and walkers in the 10km and 5km events. It was also great to see so many people talking to our blood pressure research staff and having their blood pressure checked after they crossed the line.

Blood pressure researcher Dr Martin Schultz, who ran in the 10-kilometre section of the event, said regular exercise was an ideal way to help maintain overall cardiovascular health, and a safe and effective means to reduce blood pressure levels for those with high blood pressure or 'hypertension'.

"At Menzies, we are also interested in exploring how blood pressure responds to exercise, as it may reveal important information about cardiovascular health that would remain unknown if only examined at rest."



Dr Martin Schultz, from the Menzies Blood Pressure Group, takes a runner's blood pressure after the event.



Above: Where would we be without the Menzies volunteers? They helped us all keep going.

Left: Some of the 45 Menzies runners and walkers who got their Sunday off to a great start by getting out for some exercise.



Celebration of high-performing staff and students

In February each year Menzies recognises leading researchers, Research Higher Degree students and professional staff in the Ten of the Best awards.

The awards are an opportunity to celebrate the excellence of the research undertaken at Menzies and the dedication of all staff to our mission, which is to perform internationally significant medical research leading to healthier, longer and better lives for Tasmanians.

We were delighted to have the University of Tasmania Vice-Chancellor, Professor Peter Rathjen, as our guest to present the awards and speak about the contribution that Menzies researchers and the staff who support them make to the Tasmanian community.



The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Tasmania, Professor Peter Rathjen with one of the winners of the Professional Staff Award, Brian Stokes. Mr Stokes is the manager of the Tasmanian Data Linkage Unit and the Tasmanian Cancer Registry, both of which are hosted at Menzies.

Winners of the 2015 Menzies Ten of the Best awards:



Best of the Best winner Henry West outside the Launceston General Hospital, where he is now working as part of his medical training.

Best of the Best

Henry West, for research showing that exposure to parental smoking in childhood is associated with increased risk of carotid atherosclerotic plaque in adulthood. Published in the journal *Circulation*.

Population Health Category

Ricardo Fonseca, for research on whether the promulgation of appropriate use criteria has led to an improvement in the proportion of appropriate cardiac imaging requests, *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*.

Jing Tian, who looked at the association between quitting smoking and weight gain, published in *Obesity Reviews*.

Rebecca Kelly, who looked at the factors affecting the tracking of blood pressure from childhood to adulthood, *The Journal of Pediatrics*.

Laboratory

Ruth Pye, for research that discovered that Tasmanian devils are being affected by a second transmissible cancer, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Catherine Blizzard, for research that identified the primary site in the nervous system of the development of motor neuron disease, *Disease Models & Mechanisms*.

Alex Kreiss, for research showing that Tasmanian devils can induce an immune response against Devil Facial Tumour Disease cells, *Vaccine*.

Clinical

Xia Wang, for research showing a causal relationship between synovial inflammation and structural changes in knees, *Arthritis & Rheumatology*.

Martin Schultz, for research into the clinical relevance of exaggerated blood pressure during exercise, *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*.

Weiyu Han, for research that used comprehensive MRI to find that alteration in infrapatellar fat pad signal intensity was significantly associated with knee osteoarthritic changes, *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*.

Professional Staff Awards:

Brian Stokes, Manager of the Tasmanian Data Linkage Unit and the Tasmanian Cancer Registry.

Kristyn Whitmore, Study Coordinator for the Caught CAD study and Research Nurse for TAS Help.

Post box or in-box?

Would you prefer to receive our publications and invitations by email? If so, simply let us know by sending an email to enquiries@menzies.utas.edu.au. Alternatively, to update postal details please tick the box on the tear-off slip attached to the *Bulletin* and return it to us. If you use the Reply Paid address at the bottom of the tear-off slip you won't need a stamp!

Can you participate in our research?

The scope of Menzies research is broad, and not all of our work requires participation from volunteers. However the studies listed below are looking for participants now. Studies are carefully designed and therefore research participants need to meet specific criteria to be eligible. Check our website or contact the study coordinator if you are interested in finding out more.

Using an activity monitor and smart device application to improve physical therapy after stroke – a pilot study

This four-week study is recruiting people in the Hobart region who have had a stroke in the past 12 months. We provide an activity monitor, tablet and internet connection for the duration of the study.

Contact: **Michele Callisaya**
Phone: **6226 4785 (Mon, Thur, Fri)**
Email: **Dawn.Simpson@utas.edu.au**

Diabetes Family History Study – what is the effect of a family history of type 2 diabetes on cardiometabolic function?

This study is recruiting people with type 2 diabetes, age 18-60 and who have neither any parents nor grandparents that have/had type 2 diabetes.

Contact: **Ryan Russell**
Phone: **6226 4655**
Email: **r.russell@utas.edu.au**

Genetics of Eye Diseases

We are seeking participants for genetic studies in a number of eye diseases:

- Diabetic retinopathy (diabetic eye disease): Participants should have Type 2 Diabetes treated with medication for at least 5 years, or Type 1 Diabetes.
- Keratoconus: Participants should have keratoconus diagnosed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist.
- Advanced glaucoma: Participants should have any type of glaucoma with severe vision loss treated by an ophthalmologist.

Contact: **maria.cooper@dhhs.tas.gov.au**
Phone: **6226 4731**

AirRater

This study is recruiting Tasmanians with asthma, hay fever or other lung conditions, or carers of those with these conditions.

Phone: **1800 322 102**
Email: **air.rater@utas.edu.au**
More information: **www.airrater.org**

Plantar Heel Pain Study (PHEEPS)

This is a study into persistent heel pain to try to better understand the causes and course of this often frustrating condition.

Contact: **Jason Rogers**
Phone: **0414 382 906**
More information: **www.menzies.utas.edu.au/PHEEPS**

27-year follow-up of the Tasmanian Infant Health Study

We're looking for people who were born in Tasmania in 1988 or 1989 to take part in a 27-year follow-up of the Tasmanian Infant Health Study. If you or your children were born in these years, please get in touch so we can update your details and see if you're eligible to participate.

Contact: **Janette Gyselman**
Phone: **(03) 6226 2710**
Email: **tihs@menzies.utas.edu.au**
Facebook: **https://www.facebook.com/TIHS27years**

Thank you to our valued supporters

Thank you to all of our donors for your ongoing financial support and commitment to Menzies. Listed below are individual and community supporters who donated for the first time in November, December and January, 2016.

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Listed below are our Everyday Angels – our supporters who make regular gifts to Menzies.

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Researcher profile: Professor Wendy Oddy



You have recently arrived at Menzies ... Where have you come from?

I moved from Canada to Australia for my PhD, which I gained in nutritional epidemiology in 2000 from the University of Western Australia. My research on the relationship between breastfeeding and childhood

asthma has taken me to Arizona and back, but most recently I have worked at the Telethon Kids Institute in Perth.

What is the current focus of your research?

Public health nutrition is the overarching theme, and my focus is on investigating nutritional effects on adolescent and young adult mental health and cardio-metabolic risk. As Chief Investigator of a large, collaborative project in the European Union, I am also looking at the long-term effects of early nutrition on later health.

What are some of the recent findings from your work?

In the European Union study, we have shown that the longer a baby is breastfed, the less chance it has of becoming overweight or obese in adulthood.

In WA we have investigated the dietary intake of a large cohort from birth to now 22 years. It seems that the earlier children have a poorer diet, the earlier they might experience mental health problems.

We found a link between the quality of a teenager's breakfast and their mental health; a high quality breakfast consisting of at least three food groups was eaten by only 11% of teenagers, but correlated with better mental health.

It is important for teenagers to realise that nutritious foods, such as fruit and whole-grains, can be yummy and can be treats as well.

We also found that the typical 'Western' dietary pattern increased a young person's chance of developing emotional and behavioural problems. It has also contributed to the prevalence of obesity.

What are the biggest challenges in your area of research?

The biggest challenge is to obtain funding for future projects to enable our work to continue.

What is the most interesting aspect of your work?

My research informs my work as a public health nutritionist, which is ideal and rewarding for me. I also believe in nurturing young talent and am especially keen to have successful Honours, Masters and PhD students who go on to have great careers of their own.

What a difference our Angels make

Regular monthly gifts allow our scientists to plan their research secure in the knowledge of ongoing funding.

We invite you to consider securing the future of medical research by becoming an **Everyday Angel**. You can nominate an area of research and a donation amount that suits you best – no amount is too small. The amount is then deducted on a regular, monthly basis from a credit card or direct debited from your bank. It is hassle free and you can alter or stop your contributions at any time. No administrative costs are deducted.

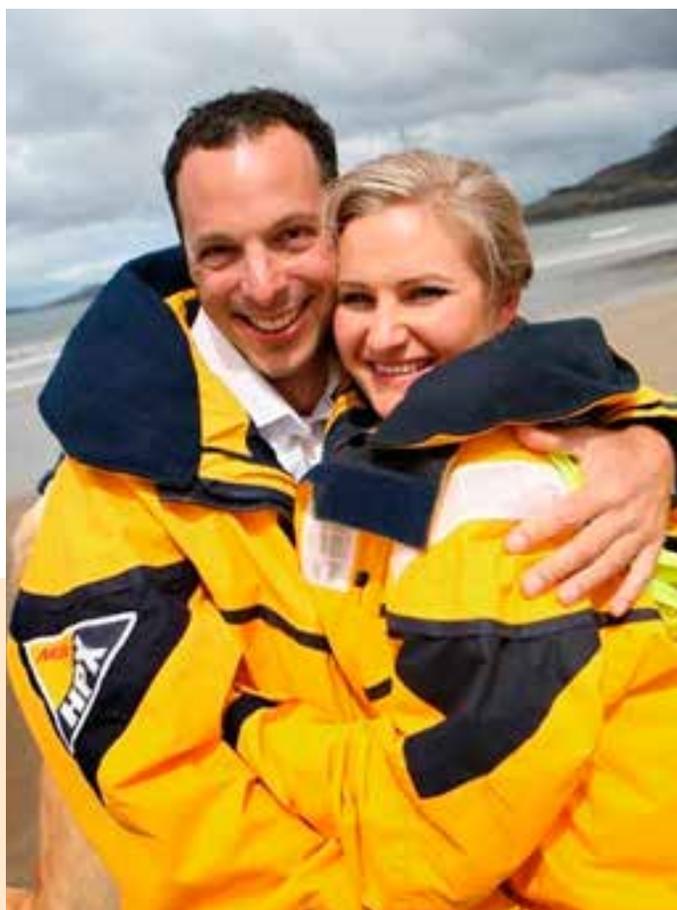
As an **Everyday Angel** you will receive invitations to Menzies events, acknowledgement on the Menzies website, a copy of every Menzies Bulletin (where your contribution will be acknowledged) and an annual tax receipt in July.

If you wish to become an **Everyday Angel** please contact Bree House on 6226 7707, e-mail Menzies.Advancement@utas.edu.au or sign up on our website at www.menzies.utas.edu.au.

"We made the decision to start donating as Everyday Angels after Josh's father passed away with cancer. It's so nice to know that we are contributing to research that can make a difference to people's lives. The Everyday Angel program makes it really simple for us, and making a regular contribution helps Menzies to plan for how our donation will be spent."

Felicity Ey

We are very grateful to our Everyday Angels, such as Felicity and Josh Ey, who have been donating to Menzies for eight years.



International applause for student's MND poster

Menzies PhD student Rosemary Clark has been recognised internationally by senior researchers in Motor Neuron Disease with a presentation of her research winning the scientific poster prize at the world's largest gathering of researchers in the field.

Ms Clark is in the third year of her PhD at Menzies. Her scientific poster was one of 300 presented at the 26th International Symposium on MND that took place in Orlando, Florida, in December. The symposium attracted more than 1000 delegates, representing the global community and leaders in MND research.

The poster described the first identification of specific interneuron populations altered early and progressively in the brain, a novel finding in the MND research field. "We hope that this work will extend upon our understanding of the cellular components involved in the disease and lead to the discovery of new therapeutics aimed at the restoration of normal nervous system function, toward the cure for MND," Ms Clark said.

Ms Clark is the first author on the poster, which also draws on other Menzies research by Mariana Brizuela, Dr Catherine Blizzard, Dr Kaylene Young and Associate Professor Tracey Dickson, as well as Dr Anna King from the Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre.



Rosemary Clark has received international recognition for work in motor neuron disease.

Menzies is one of Australia's most important research centres for MND. Ms Clark is part of Associate Professor Tracey Dickson's lab, which is within Menzies' Neurodegenerative Diseases/Brain Injury research theme.

Every donation makes a difference

Parkinson's Tasmania is a great supporter of the work at Menzies, and in December they visited us again to present a generous donation.

The President of Parkinson's Tasmania, Helen Connor-Kendray, presented a cheque for \$30,000 to Associate Professor Tracey Dickson, who is the Deputy Director at Menzies and who leads the Institute's Parkinson's research. Associate Professor Dickson said support from Parkinson's Tasmania had allowed researchers to broaden the base of their work to investigate possible therapies that they would not have been able to look into without this funding.

"The medications that are currently available for Parkinson's try to manage the disabling symptoms, but do not target the disease itself," Associate Professor Dickson said. "We have been able to use experimental models in early trials of a particular drug to see if it is possible to inhibit the trafficking and accumulation of a protein that is thought to cause the toxicity and death of dopamine neurons that characterises Parkinson's Disease.

This is possible because of the help we have received from Parkinson's Tasmania."

Our sincere thanks to Parkinson's Tasmania, which, in addition to fundraising, provides support for people living with Parkinson's disease, their carers and their families.



Associate Professor Tracey Dickson receives a cheque from the President of Parkinson's Tasmania, Helen Connor-Kendray, surrounded by members of Parkinson's Tasmania and other Parkinson's researchers from Menzies.

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Note: all donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

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If you would like more information please contact the Institute Advancement Manager on 03 6226 4236.

Bequests save lives by funding research. **THANK YOU**

In Memoriam

**November 2015 to the
end of January 2016**

**We gratefully acknowledge
gifts made in honour of:**

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