

The Current

Bionics Institute Newsletter

AUTUMN 2023

Our future
Superstars

Australian
Honours

From students to
Innovators



Bionics
Institute

A Word from our CEO

Emeritus Professor Field Rickards started his research career as a PhD student with Bionics Institute founder and bionic ear pioneer, Laureate Professor Graeme Clark AC.

He went on to pursue a stellar career in audiology research, later becoming Dean of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne.

It is very fitting that he presents the Field Rickards Awards for Leadership and Impact each year to our stellar staff and students. Congratulations to the awardees Dr Tommy Peng, Stephen Lee, Dr Sally Herring, Lisa Dyball and our Tinnitus team on their achievements in 2022!

As this story illustrates, students are both integral to the success of the Bionics Institute and are the superstars of the future. That's why we have introduced the Innovate for Life Student Scholarships to attract biomedical, engineering and neuroscience students to undertake a Masters by Research or PhD at the Bionics Institute.

As you can imagine, many young people are unable to commit to postgraduate study because they simply can't afford it. A scholarship can be the difference between the brightest students using their skills to find solutions to challenging medical conditions or deciding to follow a different path.

In this newsletter, you will meet some PhD students who are now senior researchers at the Bionics Institute, plus some research stars of the future who joined us for a summer internship to work on research into hearing, Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease. To find out how you can support the next generation of Bionics Institute researchers, come along to our free webinar in April.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who donated to our Alzheimer's Christmas Appeal.

“Your support will help us launch a clinical trial into a promising new treatment for this debilitating disease as soon as possible. Thank you.”



Mr Robert Klupacs
CEO

PS A gift in your Will is a wonderful way to leave a legacy for generations to come - take a look at our webinar on the next page to find out how.

Research grant news

In exciting news, a number of our researchers have been awarded grants.

Professor Colette McKay was awarded a prestigious National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Development Grant to progress a new hearing test for babies to the next stage of commercialisation. Professor James Fallon, Dr Mehrnaz Shoushtarian and Dr Thushara Perera were awarded grants from the Promobilia Foundation in Sweden. Associate Professor Rachael Richardson was awarded a CASS Foundation grant, and Ella Trang was awarded a grant by the Eirene Lucas Foundation.

We look forward to combining this funding with generous donations from our supporters to speed up our research.



Australian honours in our community

Congratulations to world-renowned neurologist and close collaborator of the Bionics Institute Professor Mark Cook, who was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for distinguished service to neurological medicine and research through contributions to the treatment of epilepsy.

And congratulations to Bionics Institute Board member John Simpson, who was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for significant service to the business sector, to education, and to the community.

We thank Professor Mark Cook AO and Mr John Simpson AM for their enormous contributions to the Bionics Institute as we seek solutions for the world's most challenging medical conditions.



From PhD students to Bionics Institute Innovators

Meet some of our PhD students who have gone on to become research leaders at the Bionics Institute, developing new solutions for challenging conditions, including hearing loss, rheumatoid arthritis and Parkinson's disease.



Dr Darren Mao

Dr Darren Mao completed his PhD in 2020 and is now working as a Development Engineer in the Translational Hearing Research team. He says: "As a former PhD student at the Bionics Institute, I learnt to be an effective researcher and had an opportunity to be very hands-on with my work. Now I am continuing to use these skills at the Bionics Institute to develop EarGenie®, aiming to optimise treatments for infants with hearing loss."



Dr Tomoko Hyakumura

Dr Tomoko Hyakumura completed her PhD in 2018 and is now working as a Research Fellow developing a vagus nerve stimulation treatment for Crohn's disease and rheumatoid arthritis. She says: "Working at the Bionics Institute is inspiring. I am excited about the research projects I work on, and grateful to be working with the teams of talented and dedicated people."



Dr San San Xu

Dr San San Xu completed her PhD in 2020 and is now undertaking a Fellowship in the UK. She says: "It gave me the opportunity to work on projects that were highly relevant and translatable to clinical practice in a supportive and collaborative environment. I am now working in a postdoctoral role as a Research Fellow and neurologist in the deep brain stimulation unit at the UCL Institute for Neurology at Queen Square, London."

Upcoming events

We look forward to seeing you at one of our upcoming free events. You can register by clicking on the link or opening the page on your phone using the QR code.

Want to support the next generation of Bionics Institute researchers?

When: 1.00-2.00pm AEST | Thurs 27 April

Where: Via Zoom

RSVP: Attendance is free but registration is essential via the QR code

Join our free webinar to learn how students are the research superstars of the future, and why they depend on the generous support of our donors.



[Register now](#)

Recent events

If you missed any of our recent events, you can view a recording by clicking on the link, or opening the web page on your phone using the QR code.



Alzheimer's Disease Webinar

Learn how Professor Kate Hoy and her team are developing a revolutionary new treatment for Alzheimer's disease using Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS).



[View event](#)



How to Include a Gift in Your Will Webinar

Find out how including a charity in your Will could help the Bionics Institute transform the lives of people living with challenging diseases.



[View event](#)

In the News

Awards for leadership and impact

The Field Rickards Awards were presented to acknowledge outstanding contributions and achievements of staff and students to the Bionics Institute in 2022.



Fighting memory loss in Alzheimer's disease

Professor Kate Hoy was featured in the Herald Sun and all major TV news channels talking about the launch of her world-first trial into a new way to fight memory loss in Alzheimer's disease.



PhD student wins back-to-back awards

Congratulations to Bionics Institute PhD candidate Elise Ajay, who has won back-to-back public speaking awards at major research conferences.



Bionics Institute takes on the Yarra

In December 2022, over 40 staff, family and friends walked 16km to raise vital funds for medical device research at the Bionics Institute.



Read more news stories



Med Tech Talks Podcast

Listen to our latest podcast episodes, where we ask leading industry experts about what drives successful innovation and what the future of Australian med tech should look like. Guests include Dig Howitt (CEO of Cochlear Ltd.), Associate Professor Tom Oxley (CEO of Synchron) and Professor Mark Cook AO (neurologist and founder of Epiminder).



Listen to the podcast



Donation Form

I would like to make a gift of:

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Make this a **MONTHLY** gift*

Making a regular gift is a quick and easy way of helping us plan ahead. By knowing that we have a regular income stream, we can look to the future and ensure our research will have the greatest impact.

**Your gift will be deducted on the 20th of each month and will continue unless you notify us to stop it.*

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I have made a bank transfer to NAB
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Enclosed is my cheque made payable to the
Bionics Institute of Australia



I would like to receive information about
making a gift in my Will

You are welcome to call and give us your credit card details over the phone: 03 9667 7500, or donate online at www.bionicsinstitute.org

Thank you for supporting the Bionics Institute
384—388 Albert Street, East Melbourne VIC 3002
Email: philanthropy@bionicsinstitute.org



Philanthropy Update

Thank you to all our generous donors who gave over \$85,000 towards our brain stimulation research, helping to fight memory loss and the distressing symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. This is the highest amount that we have ever raised for a Christmas appeal.

The proceeds will help Professor Kate Hoy and her team move more quickly towards a clinical trial for this vital work, using Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation of the brain as a potential game-changer in Alzheimer's treatment.

Some of you have been running or walking for us to raise funds for our innovative research programs, completing triathlons and the Melbourne Marathon or walking along the Yarra River as part of our 'Bionics Takes on the Yarra' event in December.

We love to see the various challenges you take part in to support our work and we have made it very easy for anyone to set up their own challenge page, accessed via the QR code to the right. Please let us know if you would like to support us in our community fundraising efforts and we can send you a full information pack.

Recently, we have had a number of donors wanting to help support our students and we are delighted to be able to offer Bionics Institute scholarships for PhD and Masters by Research students, both for study and for travel to conferences.

Our students are the lifeblood of the Bionics Institute and will become our research superstars of the future. We are excited to help them translate their research ideas into clinical reality.

“With thanks to all our donors for your interest and financial support. We know you have lots of choices and we are delighted that you have chosen to support the innovative work of the Bionics Institute.”



Ann Fazakerley
Head of Philanthropy

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann Fazakerley".

Supporting the Bionics Institute

Celebrate and donate to make your day more special

Whether it's your birthday, anniversary, wedding or any other occasion, asking your friends and family to make a donation in lieu of gifts is a wonderful way to make your day even more special.



[Read more](#)

Free Will writing resources

Bionics Institute has partnered with Gathered Here, one of Australia's leading online Will platforms, so that you can easily create your lawyer-reviewed Will. The service is free and makes it easy to leave a legacy for future generations by including the Bionics Institute in your Will.



[Read more](#)

Take on a challenge and fundraise at the same time!

Have you thought about setting yourself a challenge and fundraising for the Bionics Institute at the same time? You could train to run 10km, take on a challenging hike or give up alcohol for a month. Whatever it is, if you're thinking of setting up a fundraiser to support Bionics Institute research, we'd love to hear from you.



[Read more](#)



Well done to our Melbourne Marathon team: Wendy McManamy (pictured), Mica Haneman and Wendy Adams!

Future Research Superstars

Students studying STEM subjects at universities across Oceania were selected to join this year's prestigious AMGEN Scholarship Program at the University of Melbourne and seven chose to undertake a summer internship at the Bionics Institute. Here's a round-up of the projects they worked on during their eight weeks with our researchers, where they gained an insight into a potential career path to become our future superstars.



Research into a new treatment to fight memory loss in Alzheimer's disease

Harjas was supervised by Dr Dave Hill and Dr Oscar Murphy to gain a unique insight into the use of Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation to fight memory loss in people with Alzheimer's disease.



Infant hearing research

Arjuna was supervised by Senior Data Scientist Dr Gautam Balasubramanian, supporting our researchers in developing a new hearing test for babies, EarGenie®, that aims to give babies the best chance to hear and speak clearly.

*Arjuna is pictured with hearing researcher Dr Darren Mao.



Vagus nerve stimulation research

Helen was supervised by Research Fellow Dr Tomoko Hyakumura to work on a project to investigate the potential to use abdominal vagus nerve stimulation to treat neurological conditions.

*Helen is pictured with team member Jerico Matarazzo.



Nanotechnology research to restore hearing loss

Ethan was supervised by Associate Professor Andrew Wise, leader of our Hearing Therapeutics team, to assist with research into nanotechnology to develop a world-first drug treatment for hearing loss.



Optogenetic research

Melanie was supervised by Associate Professor Rachael Richardson, leader of the Optogenetics team, to assist with research into using a combination of electricity and light stimulation to alleviate chronic pain.



Cochlear implant research

Eyla was supervised by Dr Tommy Peng to assist with research into why some cochlear implant recipients are unable to understand speech as well as others.

*Eyla is pictured with hearing researcher Dr Julia Wunderlich.



New Parkinson's disease treatment research

Tom was supervised by Dr Mehrnaz Shoushtarian to investigate the use of hardware to apply non-invasive electrical stimulation to the feet, a mode of therapy being researched to treat walking difficulties for patients with Parkinson's disease.



Student opportunities and scholarships

Take a look at the opportunities and scholarships for students on our website.

[Find out more](#)

The Current is published by the **Bionics Institute**

For the Bionics Institute's latest research news, visit www.bionicsinstitute.org
If you would like to receive our email updates or have any queries, please contact us:

✉ supporterupdates@bionicsinstitute.org ☎ +61 (3) 9667 7500

384-388 Albert Street, East Melbourne, VIC 3002



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