

HEADLINES

SCHIZOPHRENIA RESEARCH INSTITUTE

OCT 2007

\$3.8 million for Schizophrenia Research

Premier Morris Iemma and the Macquarie Bank Foundation launch a powerful new partnership

Speaking at the official launch of the Schizophrenia Research Laboratory on 8 October, Premier Morris Iemma announced a major new investment in NSW schizophrenia research:

- NSW Government funding of \$2.45 million over five years to the Institute and the University of NSW to establish a Schizophrenia Evidence Library, and a new Chair in Schizophrenia Epidemiology and Population Health.
- A Macquarie Bank Foundation grant of \$1.375 million over five years to the Institute to establish Prof. Cyndi Shannon Weickert as the Macquarie Bank Foundation Chair of Schizophrenia Research.

Welcoming the new funding, Institute CEO Prof. Vaughan Carr commented that schizophrenia alone costs the Australian community \$2.62 billion and the Government \$1.70 billion annually. The cost in emotional distress to Australian families is incalculable. The new initiatives announced by Premier Iemma and Julie White, Head of the Macquarie Bank Foundation, recognise that these burdens can only be reduced by discovering new means of treatment and prevention through research. That is why this powerful new partnership has been established between NSW Health, the Schizophrenia Research Institute, Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute, University of New South Wales and the Macquarie Bank Foundation, said Prof. Carr.

Macquarie Bank Foundation

Julie White said the establishment of the Macquarie Bank Foundation Chair of Schizophrenia Research positioned Australia to take a leading role in the international schizophrenia research effort. She said it was particularly encouraging that the position had attracted someone of Prof. Cyndi Shannon Weickert's calibre and international standing. The partnership represents the Macquarie Bank Foundation's largest commitment to schizophrenia research to date. Mrs White said the Foundation's ties to the



What's in the box? Premier Iemma and Verity Firth, Minister for Science & Medical Research, are put to work in the new lab by Prof. Cyndi Shannon Weickert.



Julie White of the Macquarie Bank Foundation with Prof. Cyndi Shannon Weickert and Institute CEO Prof. Vaughan Carr.



L-R: Prof. Peter Schofield of POWMRI, Prof. Fred Hilmer of UNSW, Minister Verity Firth, Prof. Cyndi Shannon Weickert and Premier Iemma.

Schizophrenia Research Institute were further evidenced by the fact that Macquarie's Financial Services Group Head, Peter Maher, served as its Chairman.

Evidence Library and new Chair

The Schizophrenia Evidence Library will be a resource comprising relevant research findings gathered from a variety of sources and stored in a searchable database to serve as a resource to scientists, clinicians, government, consumer and carer groups, and the general public.

The linked new Chair in Schizophrenia Research Epidemiology and Population Health will specialise in the study of environmental and social influences on schizophrenia that could provide the basis for interventions. Epidemiology is highly regarded in evidence-based medicine for identifying risk factors for disease and long term outcomes of treatment.



Financial services sector raises \$230,000

Many thanks to the Investment and Financial Services Association (IFSA) for selecting the Institute as a Community Partner. IFSA is a national organisation which represents the retail and wholesale funds management, superannuation and life insurance industries. More than 1,000 IFSA members attended their annual 'Breakthrough' Conference and Charity Gala Dinner held in Brisbane in August. A record \$461,000 was raised and divided equally between the Institute and the Inspire Foundation.

IFSA CEO Richard Gilbert said the Institute was a perfect fit for the Community Partner program's focus on youth, as schizophrenia is a disease which usually appears between the ages of 15 and 25, severely disabling most sufferers. More research into this



Top: Institute CEO Prof. Vaughan Carr assists with the prize draw. Above: IFSA members in full swing for worthy causes.

complex illness is the only way to reduce the numbers of young people affected by it. The Gala Dinner was attended by Institute Chair Peter Maher, and CEO Prof. Vaughan Carr.

A Tribute to Gregory

Gregory Lema managed his schizophrenia very well for 20 years with the help of the typical antipsychotic medication Orap – holding his job with the Tax Dept., helping to pay off a mortgage, being a good father to his family and husband to his wife Marilyn. Then the Australian manufacturer of Orap stopped production in 2006, so Gregory's psychiatrist switched him to one of the newer antipsychotics. The change affected Gregory badly, so he was switched to another widely used antipsychotic drug. Shortly after, Gregory attempted suicide by overdosing with sleeping pills. He recovered and promised Marilyn he



Marilyn and Gregory Lema

would never do that again. But one day in August 2007, Marilyn came home from work to find Gregory dead in the garage after having piped exhaust fumes into his car.

Marilyn decided to dedicate Gregory's funeral to schizophrenia research, and asked all attendees to donate to the Institute instead of giving flowers. The Institute provided

'In Memory of Gregory' donation forms to enable his many friends to help find a way to prevent such tragedies happening to others.

Marilyn writes, "Greg was a very intelligent and spiritual person, a wonderful husband and father, with so many caring friends. He is now at peace - no more head stuff to deal with – for that I am happy for him."

The Institute sends condolences and thanks to Gregory's family and friends.

Cognitive and emotional development of young people



Janssen-Cilag funds preliminary study



The current view of schizophrenia is as a dysfunction in neural connectivity which may be evident in childhood but only gives rise to recognisable symptoms in adolescence. In order to identify this process it is essential to understand the basis of normal neurocognitive and emotional development.

Janssen-Cilag, a major long-term supporter of the Institute, has provided \$75,000 funding to initiate a feasibility study as a prelude to a large scale longitudinal survey of development from late childhood to adolescence.

Signs in childhood that neuronal connectivity may not be developing as it should (neurodevelopmental dysmaturation) appear to be precursors of a number of neuropsychiatric illnesses and behavioural disturbances which have their onset in adolescence.

These signs need to be distinguished from normal development of

attention motor control, perception, memory and emotion regulation. The course of development of these functions needs to be tracked over time as a basis for identifying deviations from a normal developmental trajectory.

The Janssen-Cilag funding will enable a pilot study to test measurement tools, identify the range of normal functioning, determine the feasibility of selection processes and prepare grant applications for further stages.

Depending on the award of further funding, the study proposes to screen a large number of primary school children across the spectrum of neurodevelopmental functioning. The larger study is intended to follow these children for a number of years and measure relevant health outcomes.

If the study is successful it could provide the necessary knowledge to enable the population based screening of risk factors for a number of neuropsychiatric disorders, including schizophrenia. Thus the proposed study could constitute a potentially important step towards schizophrenia prevention.

The Inspiring Combo of Cocktails & Consciousness

Where else could you go to enjoy an evening of ancient brain science and a disappearing red dot?

Held at The Garvan Institute on 19 September, the Institute's annual 'Cocktails & Consciousness' event once again delivered a unique combination of conviviality and cutting-edge science, providing all guests with fresh insight into the workings of the human brain and how they can go wrong.

As Master of Ceremonies, Lex Marinos OAM conducted the audience of 170 Schizophrenia Research Society members and other supporters through a light hearted illustrated history of brain science - from BCE 7,000 to the modern era.

Red and green '3-D' glasses were then distributed to the audience, and a short movie clip was shown featuring a big red dot which seemed to disappear - without actually leaving the screen. Prof. Cyndi Shannon Weickert then explained how the audience's optical centres had been induced to produce the illusion - demonstrating how the brain can transmit false information to consciousness.

Dr Carmel Loughland then took the stage to provide an update on the success of the Australian Schizophrenia Research Bank campaign, and Richard Schweizer spoke of his personal experience with schizophrenia.

The event also provided the opportunity to thank and bid farewell to Lee Drury, whose efforts as Corporate and Community Partnerships Manager have proved so valuable to the Institute.

Many thanks to all speakers, and to the event's Principal Sponsor Ramsay Health Care. Also thanks to Hungerford Hill for the wines, Bright Print for the invitation card, and Turning Point for the audio/visual. All combined to make the evening a great success.

If you would like to receive an invitation to future 'Cocktails & Consciousness' events, please visit our website and join the Schizophrenia Research Society.



Lex Marinos runs through the 7,000 year-long history of brain science - in 10 minutes.



Sally Shepherd and Nikki Dews of the Macquarie Bank Foundation sample the cocktails.



PhiD scholarship student Kelly Skilbeck talks about life at the cutting edge of brain research.



Lee Drury receives a farewell bouquet from Sharne Nicholls.



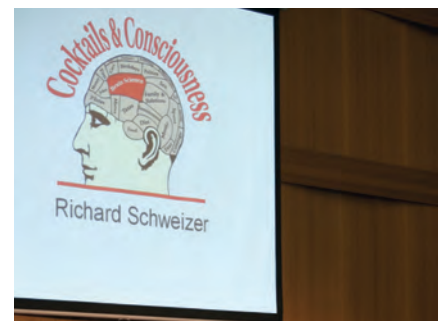
Guests experience what it's like to be misinformed by their own brains.



Prof. Cyndi Shannon Weickert uses a brain diagram to explain how the illusion happened.



Dr Carmel Loughland updates supporters on the rapid progress of the Australian Schizophrenia Research Bank.



Richard Schweizer describes what it feels like when you are unable to trust your own brain.

Schizophrenia Research Institute

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