

March 2010



“Throughout my life I felt my greatest asset was my mind. To lose that was my greatest fear”

Richard Schweizer – Patient Ambassador

Read more inside...

Technological Injection for Schizophrenia

The largest collection of schizophrenia research data in Australia, the Australian Schizophrenia Research Bank, has been given a technological boost from eResearch experts, Intersect, with a commercial grade database worth \$800,000.

The Hon. Jodi McKay, Minister for Science and Medical Research, launched the new database at the University of Newcastle on 15 February. The new system which now allows high speed access to DNA data, clinical information and brain scans for researchers is transforming the research at a national level.

What was a manual time-consuming task with limited access has been redeveloped so that Bank collaborators across the country will now be able to enter collected information into the Bank via a high security, multiple level access web portal.

Researchers who access the Bank will also be able to use this new system to access de-identified patient information for vital research studies.

Intersect works with several NSW universities to improve management of research data, introduce new methods for collaboration and new research methodologies.

“Intersect has allowed us to revolutionise the way our schizophrenia research data are collected, stored and disseminated in Australia. The new system will allow us to seamlessly collect and store data and information from volunteers with schizophrenia. Researchers can then apply online for access to samples and data to help them progress their studies,” said Dr Carmel Loughland,



Minister Jodi McKay with the project team

Manager, Australian Schizophrenia Research Bank.

“Scientists need easy access to research information on people with schizophrenia to help in the quest to understand its causes and to identify new opportunities for better treatments. The importance of this work should not be undervalued for the one in one hundred young people who will be affected by schizophrenia,” explained Vaughan Carr, CEO of the Schizophrenia Research Institute.

Visit the new Australian Schizophrenia Research Bank mini website at www.schizophreniaresearch.org.au/bank



Australian of the Year

Congratulations to Professor Patrick McGorry on becoming the first psychiatrist to be awarded the honour of Australian of the Year. It is a great step for mental illness to have this area highlighted on a national

level. Professor McGorry is Executive Director of Orygen Youth Health (OYH) and his work targets young people with emerging mental illness, including first-episode psychosis.

Professor McGorry is also a Director of the National Youth Mental Health

Foundation (headspace). He believes that early intervention offers the greatest hope for recovery and therefore takes every opportunity to educate the community to recognise the early signs of mental illness, without stigmatization.

CEO's Report

The Australian Schizophrenia Research Bank is now of sufficient size to be of use to researchers and has recently been involved in its first international replication study. This is an important step as over the last 20 years there have been approximately 1,500 genetic studies of schizophrenia but very little replication of the findings, replication being a crucial step in research.

Late last year blood samples were sent for genetic analysis as part of an international consortium seeking to replicate potentially important findings in an independent sample. Results are not yet available, but we expect to be able to report on the findings later this year. In a second

replication study, blood samples were supplied to our collaborators in Western Australia who are attempting to confirm the findings they obtained in a family genetic study of schizophrenia published some 5 years ago.

Another new opportunity has arisen to enhance our acquisition of blood samples by partnering with the Study of High Impact Psychosis (SHIP), a coalition of scientists undertaking a national study of the prevalence of psychosis and associated patterns of disability and service use. This valuable partnership will enable the Bank to acquire additional blood samples for genetic and metabolic studies



Prof. Vaughan Carr, Chief Executive Officer

from the SHIP participants, an invaluable opportunity to grow the Bank's resources, enhance its national profile and open up new opportunities for scientific collaboration. Thank you to our partners in helping to place the Australian Schizophrenia Research Bank in a key position to make future discoveries.

Prevention of drug-induced obesity

Institute Researchers at the University of Wollongong team have won a \$400,000 NHMRC project grant to pursue their studies into the prevention and treatment of atypical antipsychotic drug-induced obesity.

Weight gain is a serious problem for many people with schizophrenia, leading to health complications such as heart disease and diabetes. It can often lead to a lack of adherence to medication and this, in turn, can lead to relapse and poor long term

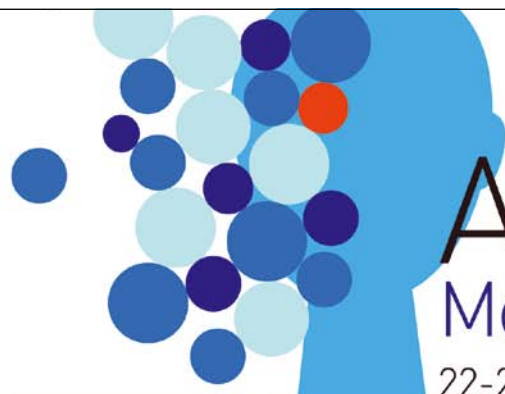
outcome for the individual. Because of the importance of this issue, the Institute has already been focused on this area of research.

Over recent years the team, led by Prof. Xu-Feng Huang, has discovered that in addition to their primary cortical effects, these drugs also alter key neuro-modulators involved in weight control.

In this new study, Prof. Huang now aims to determine therapeutic targets for the prevention of early stage drug

induced obesity and the treatment of obesity that has developed after chronic drug treatment. The study will determine the role of these neuro-modulators in the cause and consequences of obesity and will examine their role in promoting energy intake.

The study aims to provide information that may lead to the design of more effective treatments for schizophrenia with reduced side effects.



ASC2010

MoleculestoMind

22-24 September 2010 Sydney



The Schizophrenia Research Institute will be hosting the 11th Biennial Australasian Schizophrenia Conference in Sydney in September 2010. Registrations and abstract submissions are now open. Please visit www.asc2010.com for more information.

art & science

2010 sees the launch of the Art and Science series of events, which aims to bridge the thinking between art and science with key speakers from both fields. Leading scientists will join with Australia's most renowned corporate art collectors to provide a fascinating insight into the innovative and creative sides of the working brain.

Partnering with four Australian corporations, the events aim to provide enlightening entertainment to lovers of art, science and good debate. Speakers will include art curators, artists and leading medical personalities.

The inaugural event will be held on 25th March 2010 and is sponsored by the Macquarie Group Foundation. "Interpretation" – the link between art and science will be discussed by Professor Vaughan Carr and guest artist Janet Laurence, followed by a private viewing of the Macquarie Art collection.

All monies raised will go directly to medical research to find the causes to prevent and cure schizophrenia.

For more information contact
h.connealy@schizophreniaresearch.org.au



RESEARCH VOLUNTEER

Awarded Scholarship

One of the Institute's patient Ambassadors, 29 year old Richard Schweizer, who is undertaking a PhD in the Sociology Department of the University of Sydney, has recently been awarded an Australian Postgraduate Award from the University for his Research Doctorate studies.

Richard, who lives at home with loving supportive parents, has chosen his thesis topic as "Sociological factors that affect prognosis for schizophrenia."

Part of his thesis will be on how patients deal with the actual diagnosis of schizophrenia. He hopes to start the interviews in 2011 and complete his thesis in 2013.

Richard himself was initially

diagnosed with schizophrenia by his GP when he was 23, before being referred to a psychiatrist. He was in his fifth year at university and was sitting in the GP's room with his parents when he first heard the word schizophrenia mentioned.

"I felt like I was staring down a yawning chasm and I was going to fall and keep falling. It took a long time to get used to the idea - I still find it hard to say the word.

"Throughout my life I felt my greatest asset was my mind. To lose that was my greatest fear," he explained.



Despite his illness, Richard has continued his study and his recent success is a wonderful tribute to his mind, his endurance and his family.

The Institute congratulates Richard on his scholarship and wishes him every success with his thesis.



Kathryn McCabe, Research Psychologist, is a PhD student supported by a Schizophrenia Research Institute scholarship.

Meet our Researchers

What research are you doing for the Institute?

I'm doing a PhD in cognitive remediation, looking at new methods to improve face emotion processing. For most people this ability is relatively automatic and an essential component of social and interpersonal communication – but some people with schizophrenia struggle to interpret facial displays of emotion.

On a daily basis, what sort of work does this involve?

I am currently working on my thesis. When I am testing, research volunteers undertake a clinical interview and a series of computer tasks. For example, with the remediation I designed, volunteers track moving targets as closely as they can and get to see how they're

doing while completing the task. As they improve the tasks get gradually more difficult.

What part of your work will you be focusing on over the next few months?

I am presenting part of my thesis at the next SIRS (Schizophrenia International Research Society) conference in April in Florence, Italy. This is a great opportunity as it is the largest schizophrenia research conference in the world.

Why did you choose schizophrenia research?

Because of its complexity. I'm particularly interested in the social implications associated with schizophrenia. Hopefully remediation is one way to improve the quality of life for someone with schizophrenia.

Supportive partners

The Institute is fortunate to have great corporate partners who join us in our mission. Thanks to the Macquarie Group Foundation for their support with our Art and Science Series and for hosting the first event in March. Welcome to our new corporate partner PIPC Pty Ltd, a leading global specialist project and programme management consultancy.

The Institute's partnership with IFSA (Investment and Financial Services

Association) has brought new opportunities. Lifewise, an initiative of the Australian life insurance industry aimed at addressing the problem of underinsurance, is holding a fundraising dinner on 2nd March which will raise funds for the Institute and other partner charities. For more information visit www.lifewise.org.au

Thanks must also go to all those passionate and energetic individuals who work on our behalf to raise

awareness and much needed funds. In particular thanks to Mark Warren of Warren Media, for raising over \$13,000 for the Institute at the Warren Media Race Day at Hawkesbury Races in December. It was a great day, generated plenty of radio publicity and all the donated funds go directly to schizophrenia research.

Lifewise
Get wise on life insurance



SwearStop

GIVE IT UP FOR SCHIZOPHRENIA

17-23 May 2010

www.schizophreniaresearch.org.au

It's time to give it up again – SwearStop, the fun online campaign to raise awareness and much needed funds for schizophrenia starts again in May.

It's simple – just get your friends to sponsor you online to give up swearing for Schizophrenia Awareness Week.

We need 200 heroes to get involved – last year we had 100 kind heroes who took part so tell your friends and give it up. Everyone can get involved – we need your help.

All you have to do is register online

then email your friends, colleagues and family to sponsor you for the week to give it up. You don't have to collect the donations yourself as all your sponsors will donate online. You just forward your personalised webpage to your contacts.

Find out more – Register online at www.everydayhero.com.au/event/SwearStop2010

Celebration Cards - Send an E-Card

If you would rather give a more meaningful gift for a birthday, academic celebration or even Mother's Day, why not try an e-card with a donation to the Institute.

An e-card is an electronic charity card, like a direct donation but the sender sends an email card with the donations in lieu of a gift or flowers. Simply follow this link for Schizophrenia Research Institute's e-card page – www.mycause.com.au/ecards.php?charity=288 –

choose the occasion (birthday, graduation, bar mitzvah, Christmas, Mothers Day) write your message, donate and send.

We really appreciate you thinking of us and spreading the news that we need everyone's support.



Our thanks

Our Partners

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Many thanks to our government and major corporate supporters who have renewed their commitment to us and donated recently (October 2009 – January 2010)

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Joyce Beryl Lewis

In Memoriam

We offer our condolences and send thanks to the following families who have asked mourners to donate to the Institute in lieu of flowers and in memory of their loved ones. (Families and friends who may wish to set up a tribute page for a lost loved one and raise funds for the Institute can do so at a new branded webpage: www.everydayhero.com.au/event/inmemoriam)

Jason Barnes
Anne Bolton

Michael Vincent Bonzo
Thelma Cooke

Albert Garcia
Marcus Gormley

Nick Waterlow

The Schizophrenia Research Institute is the only national medical research institute solely dedicated to discovering the ways to prevent and cure schizophrenia. A registered charity throughout Australia, we rely on donations to continue our work.

Please help by completing and mailing this form to:

Schizophrenia Research Institute
405 Liverpool Street,
Darlinghurst, NSW 2010

or fax to (02) 9295 8689

You can also donate online at
www.schizophreniaresearch.org.au
or contact us by phone on
(02) 9295 8688 or by email at
contact@schizophreniaresearch.org.au



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