



July 2011



Prof. Ulli Schall

Minds In Transition- Growing up is not always easy

Institute scientist, Professor Ulrich Schall from the University of Newcastle is leading the five-year Minds in Transition (MinT) study, a project that investigates why young people transition from an 'at-risk mental state' to a first episode of psychosis.

During the years of adolescence and early adulthood, young people are particularly vulnerable to experiencing some of the early warning signs of schizophrenia and other mental illnesses - and it may be that during this time the onset of psychoses first occurs.

MinT will investigate the early signs of the later emerging illness, such as experiencing difficulties at school for the first time, withdrawing from social or fun activities, lacking energy or motivation, and having strange thoughts and ideas. These early signs will be examined as to how they develop over time, and what factors may promote or prevent a transition from 'at-risk mental state' to schizophrenia.

"An at-risk mental state is not a clinical diagnosis, it refers to a combination of factors such as family history of mental illness and a negative change in well-being and everyday functioning," Professor Schall said.

"While most study participants will not necessarily develop schizophrenia, it is anticipated that up to 30% will develop some type of psychotic illness with about 10-15% going on to develop schizophrenia."

"A primary aim of the study is to compare those who do develop a psychotic illness with the majority who do not. This information is crucial for developing

strategies for preventive measures and early intervention," he said.

Volunteers will undergo a variety of assessments, including MRI scans of the brain, providing a blood sample and EEG recordings, as well as a number of other clinical and psychological tests.

The project is being conducted in Newcastle, Orange and Sydney, and is recruiting young people aged 12 to 25 years from clinical centres and through the recently launched website – www.mint.org.au.



2011

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'Spark of Genius' is the signature gala black tie event for the Schizophrenia Research Institute. The event has been highly successful in the past because of the unique formula of having one mystery Genius guest at each table. The Genii are leaders in their fields ranging from the Arts, Media, Sports, Politics, Entertainment, Corporate and Academia.

The event will be held at Sydney Town Hall on Friday 9th September 2011 and will bring together 500 corporate and philanthropic guests for a night of fun, entertainment and fundraising.

Our principal supporter is Macquarie Group Foundation and our major sponsors include City of Sydney, Mulyan

Wines, Schweizer Kobras, Northside Group and Etihad.

The Cause

In 2011 we are dedicating the Spark of Genius event to the Schizophrenia Research Laboratory*, headed by Professor Cyndi Shannon Weickert, the Macquarie Group Foundation Chair of Schizophrenia Research.

Prof. Shannon Weickert (of ABC Australian Story fame) is driven by her own experience of growing up with a twin brother who developed

schizophrenia. She is one of a handful of developmental neurobiologists in the world who specialise in schizophrenia research. Her team of researchers have had many successes, most notably the commencement of the first clinical drug trial for the Schizophrenia Research Institute. Using an existing hormone modulator, the trial aims to improve cognitive and memory function for people with schizophrenia, opening a possibility of further education and extended employment.

Book your table online now at: www.schizophreniaresearch.org.au

*The Schizophrenia Research Laboratory is a joint initiative of the Schizophrenia Research Institute, University of NSW, Neuroscience Research Australia, and the Macquarie Group Foundation. It is supported by NSW Health.

CEO's Report

As a research institute we have an obligation not only to those affected by the illness we are investigating but also to nurture the professional development of our colleagues within the scientific community.

By making better scientists, encouraging robust research programs and fostering collaboration, we are developing a committed and able research community to better approach our goal.

The Institute recently held a number of seminars bringing together our scientists and those within our networks to showcase and discuss their current work, and seek collaboration around where we, as a scientific community, are headed next.

We also continue to grow our international networks, with the Australian Schizophrenia Research Bank now open to international researchers. This is the final phase of the rollout providing access to the Bank, making it an internationally unique enabling facility that provides the foundation for researchers to make significant contributions to future discoveries about schizophrenia.

The Institute's gala dinner, Spark of Genius, is drawing near and we thank all of our supporters and each of the guest genii who are helping us to make this a successful night. This event will raise money for the Macquarie Group Foundation Chair of Schizophrenia Research, Professor Cyndi Shannon Weickert, and her continuing work

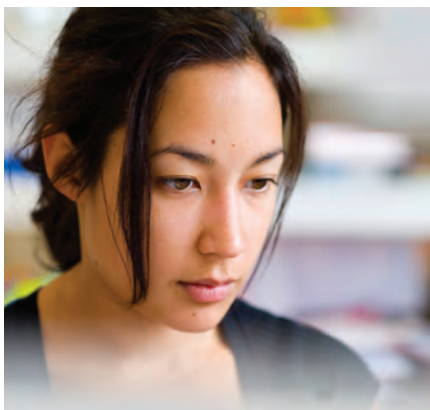


Prof. Vaughan Carr, Chief Executive Officer

at the Schizophrenia Research Laboratory.

Cyndi's expertise in schizophrenia research is well recognised, as is evidenced by her recent appointment to the Scientific Advisory Board of the international online Schizophrenia Research Forum. I congratulate her on this opportunity.

Meet our Researcher



Dr Samantha Fung is a Research Officer at the Schizophrenia Research Laboratory

Q. What research are you currently involved with?

A. Although there is uncertainty about what may be the main pathology in schizophrenia, research suggests that the inhibitory circuitry in the brain is not functioning properly. In my research at the Schizophrenia Research Laboratory

I study the inhibitory neurons (which are key to how these circuits develop), to give us clues as to why this system might not be working properly in schizophrenia.

Q. What has been the greatest challenge of this work?

A. Schizophrenia is a challenging illness to study as it presents with different symptoms that can vary between individuals. Identifying different pathologies has the potential advantage of being able to customise more effective treatments for patients.

Q. Where does your work fit in the larger schizophrenia research picture?

A. In the long term, I hope that this research will be able to be translated into more effective therapies for individuals with schizophrenia by identifying which cell types are most affected in schizophrenia and how we may enhance the function of affected cells, or even encourage new cells into these circuits.

Q. Why schizophrenia research?

A. I have always been particularly interested in the development of the brain: how cells get to where they need to be and how they interact with other cells. In the brains of people with schizophrenia we think the development of the brain has somehow been derailed, and this may lead to circuits being improperly wired. We are in an exciting era where we are seeing many more molecular clues as to how the cellular communication may be broken in the illness.

Q. What do you find most fulfilling about the work?

A. I like the challenge of using the little clues that we know about schizophrenia to ask new questions, and trying to find a way to answer them. It's exciting to know that you are making discoveries and about how different systems fit with each other, and we are helping to build a picture of what might be going wrong in the brain of someone with schizophrenia, which is key to finding new and effective ways to help these people.

Research Volunteers Needed

Research volunteers are still needed to take part in the Schizophrenia Research Laboratory's hormone modulator drug trial in Sydney. For a criteria factsheet email l.moore@neura.com.au

Putting Our Heads Together

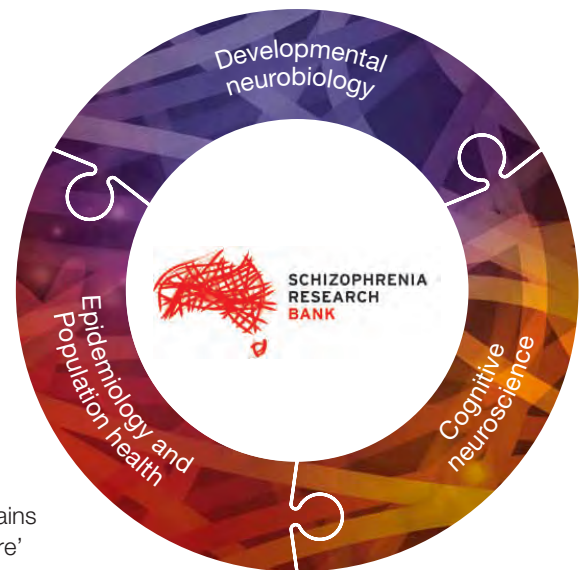
The Institute holds regular research summits that bring together our scientists from each of our principal research areas – **Developmental Neurobiology, Cognitive Neuroscience, and Epidemiology and Population Health.**

As a virtual medical research institute, by our very nature we have the unique ability to draw from a wide pool of research knowledge, leveraging all of the remarkable work that is being done across Australia in the field of schizophrenia research.

The summits provide an important opportunity for these researchers from various centres to meet in person, discuss recent advances in research, and plan for upcoming collaborative ventures. This allows us to continue to grow our research agenda, and helps to nurture early career researchers, as they can

obtain feedback and guidance from senior colleagues in their research area.

As well as contributing to ongoing investigation into schizophrenia and its treatments, these meetings also encourage scientists to take a step back and consider how the individual studies conducted at various universities and institutes from a wide range of scientific domains fit together in the 'bigger picture' of schizophrenia research.



Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes

The Institute is now a member of the **Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI)**, the peak body that represents medical research institutes.

AAMRI recognises that institutes such as the Schizophrenia Research Institute are a key component of Australia's health and education systems.

As a member institute, we are able to take part in greater scientific and administrative collaboration, which will help us continue to grow our research agenda and funding.



Norbert Schweizer



Chad Barton

Introducing New Institute Board Members

The Institute welcomes two new Board Members, **Norbert Schweizer and Chad Barton.**

Norbert has had a long involvement with the Institute as a committee member and corporate supporter. A solicitor and the founding partner at Schweizer Kobras, Norbert has expertise in business law and a wide variety of legal work. He is passionate about the future of schizophrenia research and its potential impact on the life of his own family, as his son has schizophrenia.

Chad brings to the Institute a wealth of financial knowledge. Currently the chartered accountant and chief financial

officer for Salmat, Chad previously held the position of Chief Financial Officer with Electronic Data Systems Corporation (EDS), a HP company, in Australia and New Zealand as well as CFO for EDS's Global Financial Services practice. Prior to this, Chad was Commercial Director with Singtel Optus Limited and CFO for SunSystems Australia and New Zealand. Chad has commercial and strategic expertise that will greatly benefit the Institute as it continues to grow and expand.

SwearStop



The Institute thanks everyone who took part in SwearStop and helped us raise \$40,000! As well as raising money to support schizophrenia research, SwearStoppers also helped raise awareness about the illness and our work.

Thank you to our SwearStop Ambassadors, Matt Dee and the Bondi Rescue team; Alvin Quah and Courtney Roulston, MasterChef finalists; music legend, Angry Anderson; Ray Warren, sports commentator; Channel 7's Glenn Wheeler; Jono Coleman from the Jono and Dano Show; Miss World Australia 2010, Ashleigh Francis; Nate Myles from the Sydney Roosters; Liam Reddy from Sydney FC; Mark Geyer from Triple M; and Nigel Brennan, author and photojournalist.

Karate Tournament

The Australia Vs the World- Full Contact Karate Tournament will be held Sunday 7 August, with all proceeds being donated to the Institute.

The world's best karate champions from Japan, Romania, Russia and Lithuania will take part, and the tournament will be broadcast of Foxtel's Fuel channel in September.

Full details under Events at:
www.thejuniors.com.au

Running for Schizophrenia Research

A mother, a researcher and a celebrity Ambassador make up the Schizophrenia Research Institute City2Surf team to fundraise for the Institute by running the 14 kilometre race on 14 August.

Each is showing their support for very different reasons.

Eva Urban is running for her daughter and her mother, who have both suffered schizophrenia.

Mathieu Verdurand is an Institute researcher who is also a frequent fundraiser for our work.

Ashleigh Francis, Miss World Australia 2010 has also joined the City2Surf team, continuing her support as an Institute Ambassador.

You can show your support by donating to the team and leave a message of encouragement, or if you are also taking



Mathieu Verdurand, Institute scientist

part in the City2Surf then you can join the team too.

www.fundraise.city2surf.com.au/SchizophreniaResearchInstitute_c2s

Institute Ambassador Speaks Out



Institute Ambassador, Matt Dee, Bondi Rescue

Matt Dee, a lifeguard on the hit Channel TEN show Bondi Rescue, has spoken about the pain and anguish of losing his sister, Rachel, to schizophrenia nearly two years ago.

He told his family's story to The Sun-Herald and the 6.30pm with George Negus program during Schizophrenia Awareness Week in May, speaking in support of the Institute's SwearStop campaign.

Maxi, Corey and Kerrbox from Bondi Rescue were SwearStop Ambassadors, announcing that they were taking part for their teammate, Matt.

The Institute thanks Matt, his family and the entire Bondi Rescue team for all of their support.

Jack Gibson Cup



Jack Gibson

The Jack Gibson Cup, an annual game between the Sydney Roosters and Parramatta Eels in memory of Jack Gibson will be held at the end of August, with the Institute the charity partner for the event.

Jack Gibson was a founding member of the Institute, and a rugby league coach who guided both the Roosters and Eels to premierships.

www.jackgibsoncup.com.au

Australian Schizophrenia Research Bank

Open to International Researchers

The Institute's Australian Schizophrenia Research Bank is the biggest research resource of its type ever undertaken in Australia.

The data provided by all of our Bank volunteers is now able to be used by researchers across Australia for research and analysis. This resource has already supported a variety of studies into schizophrenia. From 1 July this year, international researchers and commercial entities are able to apply to use the data and recruit volunteers.

The Bank provides access to the de-identified medical and cognitive performance, genetic samples, and brain scans of people with schizophrenia,

as well as a healthy control group. Participants are also able to volunteer to be contacted for future research projects.

The volunteers who participate in this project are key contributors to a research resource which may provide researchers with a unique breakthrough.

Although more volunteers are needed, and recruitment is ongoing, the Bank is now reaching its goal to provide researchers with access to a large, high quality dataset to support schizophrenia research.



Research Australia's



Support the Institute by hosting a Cook for a Cure event in August.

Register online by searching for 'schizophrenia' under 'Search Cook For A Cure'

www.cookforacure.com.au/find



Prof. Cyndi Shannon Weickert

Appointment to International Forum

The Institute's Professor Cyndi Shannon Weickert, Macquarie Group Foundation Chair of Schizophrenia Research, has been announced as the first Australian woman to be appointed to the Scientific Advisory Board of the international online Schizophrenia Research Forum.

The forum is a key online resource for the schizophrenia research community, designed to foster international

collaboration and share research news to help in the search for causes, treatments, and understanding of schizophrenia. Professor Shannon Weickert is one of only a handful of international experts appointed as an advisor for this international online community.

www.schizophreniaforum.org

Our thanks

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M U L Y A N



Many thanks to all of our supporters who have renewed their commitment to us and donated recently (March 2011 - July 2011).

For privacy reasons we have chosen not to list all our individual supporters but would like to take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge their generosity. The commitment of the community is vital to our ongoing success.

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Sydney FC
Michael Giddens Videography
The Narrative
Bruce Usher Photography

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 www.everydayhero.com.au/event/inmemoriam

Chance Mullins
Elizabeth Mealey

Glen Kelly
James Dempsey

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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