

April 2011



Dr Kristin Laurens

## The developing minds of children

The Institute is supporting a longitudinal study of child development to identify vulnerability and resilience factors at a population level that may be related to later onset of mental illnesses, including schizophrenia.

It is anticipated that if we can identify population patterns of vulnerability,

as well as those of resilience and well-being, then in the longer term this may lead to the development of more effective, community-based early intervention and prevention programs.

The NSW Child Development Study will span twenty years, and follow the development of over 80,000 children from birth through childhood and adolescence by linking a number of existing databases.

The key areas that the study will examine are emotion regulation, social behaviour, academic achievement and cognitive function, and physical health.

Dr Kristin Laurens works with the Institute's CEO Prof. Vaughan Carr, Chair of Schizophrenia Epidemiology and Population Health at the University of NSW and is highly experienced in establishing longitudinal child development studies.

Dr Laurens maintains a part-time position at the Institute of Psychiatry at King's College London in the UK, where she directs a program of research on early detection and intervention for schizophrenia and related disorders.

"I am excited to be back working in Australia on such an important project which will continue Australia's reputation for innovative research at the forefront of early intervention and prevention for mental illness," Dr Laurens said.

Her work both here and in the UK provides an unprecedented opportunity for the Institute to obtain access to data regarding child development and the factors preceding psychosis onset, which will provide invaluable research tools for years to come.

The team has been awarded significant funding by the Australian Research Council to support the first phase of this research.



Chris McDiven AM.

## New Chair of Board for the Institute

Chris McDiven AM has been appointed as the new Chair of the Board of the Schizophrenia Research Institute.

Ms McDiven will use her knowledge and experience in business, politics and education, along

with her commitment to schizophrenia research to support the Institute's strategy to discover the ways to prevent and cure schizophrenia.

On Australia Day 2011 Ms McDiven was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia for service to the Liberal

Party of Australia, and to the community through women's and education organisations.

"The Institute is unique in its collaborative approach, ensuring the best minds in schizophrenia research are working together to improve treatments and in time prevent this lifelong incurable illness," said Ms McDiven.

Chris McDiven is a former Company Director and manages a family property and investment trust. She was Federal President of the Liberal

Party of Australia from 2005 until 2008, the first woman to hold this position in the Party's 60 year history.

Ms McDiven joined the Board of the Schizophrenia Research Institute in 2009. She replaces Peter Maher, Macquarie Group who has served as Chairman since 2006. The Institute thanks Mr Maher, who will remain on the Board. He has been instrumental in developing key partnerships for the Institute since he joined the Board in 2003 and the Executive and members of the Board are grateful for his ongoing commitment.



See inside for full details on how to join the fun of SwearStop and support the Institute

# CEO's Report

Medical research can be a slow process and so it is with great excitement that we acknowledge a landmark period for Australian schizophrenia research with the commencement of our first childhood longitudinal study, examining education and health records of school age children. This type of epidemiological work has been undertaken most successfully overseas, notably the Scandinavian countries, but also here in Western Australia. We now have an excellent opportunity for scientists in New South Wales to engage in research of this kind.

Our Cognitive research program is also proving promising as Assoc. Prof. Ulrich Schall progresses with his study into young people at risk

of developing schizophrenia and related psychoses. Both these studies will help to increase the information needed in our mission to prevent schizophrenia in the future.

We continue our work towards understanding the neurobiological basis of schizophrenia to help us make a difference for those living today with the illness. We are hopeful that the team working with the Macquarie Group Foundation Chair of Schizophrenia Research, Prof. Cyndi Shannon Weickert at the Schizophrenia Research Laboratory, will have some early results to share with us in 2011 on the Institute's first clinical drug trial. If the trial demonstrates that the experimental drug does have a beneficial impact, this could lead to improvement in



Prof. Vaughan Carr, Chief Executive Officer

cognitive ability and memory in those living with the illness, thereby decreasing the overall disability currently associated with it.

We continue to actively fundraise for Cyndi's Laboratory in 2011 and hope you will support us in our mission to find a cure for schizophrenia.

## Meet our Researcher



Stu Fillman is a PhD student at the Schizophrenia Research Laboratory.

**Q. What research are you involved with for the Institute?**

A. My research focuses on the changes that occur in the cells of people's brains when they are affected by schizophrenia. The human brain is composed of over

a hundred billion cells all of which interact with each other. My work looks at how different receptors – through which neurotransmitters cause responses in cells – may be altered in people with schizophrenia and how this may result in some of the problems these individuals run into on a daily basis.

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

A. The large amount of information that I have to deal with is the biggest challenge! Using a combination of our existing knowledge and statistics I have to make decisions about what it is we need to look at. For instance there are 33,528 genes that we are currently measuring.

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

A. We've collected lots of data on the expression of all of these genes in people with schizophrenia and those who do not have it. I'm going to be collaborating with

some individuals at the University of Queensland to help me identify the important changes that could lead to new treatments. That's one of the really interesting things about modern science, it's impossible to know everything yourself so in order to be productive you need to work together with other researchers.

That's a real strength of the Schizophrenia Research Institute and something I'm proud to be a part of.

**Q. Why did you choose schizophrenia research?**

A. My work combines my interests in neuroscience and psychology, and this led me to study mental health issues. Schizophrenia is one of the most debilitating mental health illnesses. It's my hope that I can discover markers that will indicate who will respond to the drugs that we have to maximise individuals' wellbeing while we wait for a new generation of treatments that my colleagues are working on!

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# Working to Improve Cognitive Performance



Professor Cyndi Shannon Weickert and her team at the Schizophrenia Research Laboratory\* are continuing the Institute's first clinical drug trial aiming to improve cognitive performance in people with schizophrenia.

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"For many people with schizophrenia, one of the long-term issues is lack of employment and social isolation. Contributing to these functional deficits are problems with cognitive abilities, such as problem solving and communication," said Prof. Shannon Weickert.

"If we can find a way to improve the cognitive performance of people with schizophrenia, then we may improve their day-to-day life and begin restoring their independence," she said.

A group of 88 schizophrenia patients are participating, all of whom are on stable medication. The trial

investigates the use of an existing hormone modulator, raloxifene, in these patients to see if their cognitive ability improves.

Patients undertake symptom assessment, cognitive testing, brain scanning and blood tests to identify whether there are any improvements. Initial results suggest that the medicine is well tolerated and that compliance is good. We look forward to analysing the results of this trial in the second half of 2011.

Prof. Shannon Weickert is largely driven by her own personal experiences as she watched twin brother struggle with schizophrenia. She is one of the few neurodevelopmental biologists in schizophrenia in the world. Her research over the past 20 years has focused on determining how normal brain development is changed in schizophrenia.

The Institute is holding its famous 'Spark of Genius' Gala event at Town Hall, Sydney on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2011 to raise much needed funds for the Schizophrenia Research Laboratory. For more information call 02 9295 8688 or visit [www.schizophreniaresearch.org.au](http://www.schizophreniaresearch.org.au)

**Spark**  
of GENIUS  
2011

\*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.





SAVE THE DATE

**FRIDAY 9th SEPTEMBER 2011**  
SYDNEY TOWN HALL

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY

Macquarie Group  
Foundation



## Spark of Genius

Spark of Genius is the signature gala black tie event of the Schizophrenia Research Institute

Each table at the event features one mystery 'Genius' guest. The Genii are leaders in their fields ranging from the Arts, Media, Sports, Politics, Entertainment, Business and Academia. Previous Spark Genii

have included Andrew Denton, Adam Spencer, Chef Bill Granger, Artist and entertainer Reg Mombassa and Kerry O'Brien.

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.

To find out more contact Sharne Nicholls, (02) 9295 8698, or download a booking form at [www.schizophreniaresearch.org.au](http://www.schizophreniaresearch.org.au).

### 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.

## SwearStop Can You Give It Up For Mental Health?

SwearStop, 16 – 22 May 2011.

SwearStop, the Institute's awareness and fundraising campaign, is coming up this May. Join in the fun and help raise some money to support our research.

Angry Anderson, Alvin and Courtney from MasterChef, and the boys from Bondi Rescue will join fellow Aussies in 'Giving It Up' by quitting swearing for one week in support of mental health.

Each year during Schizophrenia Awareness Week SwearStoppers give up swearing for one week to help increase awareness about the devastating effects of schizophrenia and raise funds to support the Institute's research.

Anyone can take part, you simply sign up to become a SwearStopper at [www.swearstop.com.au](http://www.swearstop.com.au), swear to give up swearing for the week, and ask your friends, family and colleagues to sponsor you with an online donation.

Other Ambassadors who will be leading the cuss-free charge include Liam Reddy from Sydney FC, Jono Coleman TV and Radio Presenter (The Jono and Dano Show on WSFM), Mark Geyer from Triple M, Nate Myles from NRL Roosters, Glenn Wheeler from Channel 7, and Miss World Australia 2010 Ashleigh Francis.

Can you Give It Up? Join SwearStop now and start fundraising today.



# Fundraising Events

In addition to participating in Institute events, you can also fundraise for us by participating in the following events:



**Sydney Morning Herald Half Marathon,**  
15th May, 2011

The 20th Sydney Morning Herald Half Marathon, presented by Colonial First State, will be held on Sunday, May 15. The event is Australia's largest Half Marathon, attracting more than 10,000 participants.

To enter visit  
[www.smhhalfmarathon.com.au](http://www.smhhalfmarathon.com.au).

**2011 Gold Coast Airport Marathon,**  
2nd-3rd July, 2011

The 33rd annual Gold Coast Airport Marathon will be staged on Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd July 2011 – always the first weekend in July. More than 23,000 took part in 2010.

To enter visit  
[www.goldcoastmarathon.com.au](http://www.goldcoastmarathon.com.au)

**Run Melbourne,**  
presented by The Age,  
17th July, 2011

Run Melbourne, presented by *The Age* will be held once again, offering participants a half marathon, a 10km run and a 5km run or walk starting and finishing at Federation Square. New in 2011, is the free Run Melbourne health and fitness expo (Thursday, 14 July - Saturday, 16 July) and a 3km Kids Event (Saturday, 16 January).

Register now at  
[www.runmelbourne.com.au](http://www.runmelbourne.com.au)

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](http://www.schizophreniaresearch.org.au)  
or contact us by phone on  
(02) 9295 8688 or by email at  
[contact@schizophreniaresearch.org.au](mailto:contact@schizophreniaresearch.org.au)



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# Our Thanks

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## Supporters

Many thanks to all of our supporters who have renewed their commitment to us and donated recently (August 2010- February 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.*

### Corporate Supporters

Aberdeen Asset Management  
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### Grants and Foundations

Sylvia & Charles Viertel Foundation, managed by ANZ Trustees  
The Pratt Foundation  
The Ron & Peggy Bell Family Legacy, managed by ANZ Trustees  
Thyne Reid Foundation

### Community Groups

CFMEU NSW Branch  
Steggles

### Pro Bono

Bruce Usher Photography  
Chubb Insurance Company of Australia Limited  
KPMG  
Robert Oatley Vineyards

## 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](http://www.everydayhero.com.au/event/inmemoriam))

Ben Williams  
Glen Kelly  
Jane Porter  
Maria D'Orazio

Michael Vincent Bonzo  
Vincent Fernando  
William Pearman