

Lab partners in harmony

One of Australia's top jazz musicians, Jim Conway, has teamed up with our MS researchers – including Dr Fiona McKay from Westmead Millenium Institute – to launch our Research Partners program and encourage regular contributions.

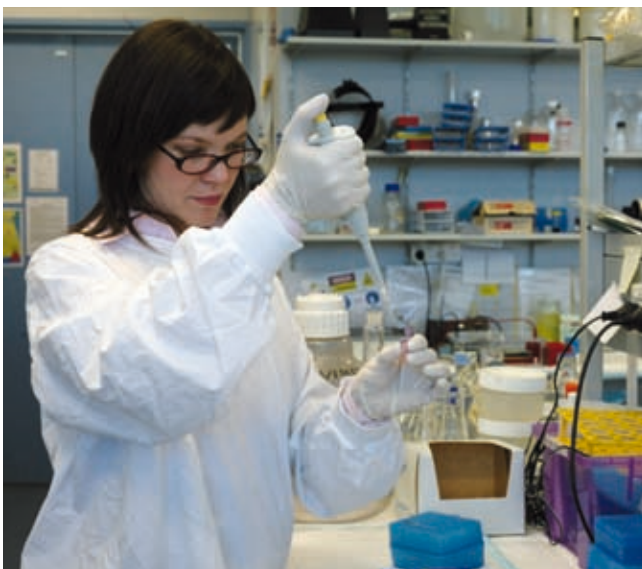
In a few short years, MSRA has helped facilitate research that addresses why multiple sclerosis starts and how it progresses.

To acknowledge existing individual and corporate donors and encourage future supporters, MSRA is implementing a new recognition program for regular donors.

The MSRA Research Partners program will invite participation from the community at all levels, demonstrating to individuals, foundations and corporations how they can all be partners in helping fund specific research projects, addressing prevention, better treatments or a cure for MS.

Jim Conway is patron of the program. He also plays the harmonica like no other. 'As a professional musician I've spent the past 35 years of my life performing and establishing a career. I respect the researchers who have committed themselves in a similar way to their pursuits,' says Jim.

Jim hopes to encourage others to support Australia's top MS researchers in what they do best.



▶ DR FIONA MCKAY IN THE LAB AT WESTMEAD.



▶ HARMONIOUS LAB PARTNERS JIM CONWAY AND DR FIONA MCKAY.

'I want to assist those with the know-how to get on with their vital work. The easier we make it for them, the quicker we will see results. Becoming a research partner allows me to get involved with specific research and be part of the team,' says Jim.

Jeremy Wright, Executive Director of MSRA, believes that the partnering program is a way of sharing the enthusiasm. 'There is such a strong sense of support for our researchers. Everyone wants them to succeed. In turn, our researchers want to share their results with the MS community – family and friends.'

'It's ideal to have a relationship that works both ways: donors know how their money is making a difference and researchers get on with the job.'

Anyone can join our MSRA Research Partners, simply via a regular donation. This will be allocated to a specific research project, and the donor will be acknowledged in different ways – a certificate & badge of appreciation, informative presentations from MS researchers, research summary reports and more.

You can begin today. Go to our website www.msra.org.au or call 1300 356 467 for details. We welcome you to this new initiative.

MS research accelerates on many fronts – Part 2:

Read about the diverse research MSRA is currently funding, on page 2

Further information is available on our website: www.msra.org.au

MSRA invests in research which target the triggers for MS, better treatment and a cure for MS. **This is a snapshot of our current MSRA-funded research activity.**

Genetics & Epidemiology

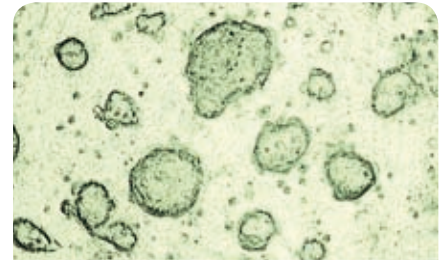
Identifying the triggers for MS

- **ANZGene** is a major collaboration mapping the genetic make-up of 2,000 people with MS to identify the genes that influence MS susceptibility.
- **Ausimmune** is a study investigating the link between MS and environmental factors. Results due soon may lead to prevention trials.

Developing better treatments

- At the Westmead Millennium Institute**
- Dr Lisa Sedger's work will identify if a specific gene called *TRAIL* and its gene products influence MS susceptibility, disease progression and responsiveness to a specific immunomodulatory drug.

A cure for MS via repair or regeneration of cells



Neurobiology

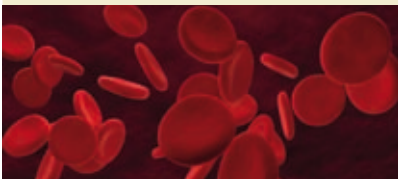
- At the University of Melbourne**
- Brett Drummond is investigating if a specific change to the surface of myelin could be triggering MS.
- At the University of Sydney**
- Prof John Prineas is interrogating the cells that create myelin to understand why they appear to be dead or dying in the early stages of MS.
- At Flinders University**
- Dr Mark Slee is looking for abnormalities in the energy-producing cells that might selectively lead to the more progressive form of MS.
- Working across Australia**
- The **MS Brain Bank** is a tissue bank securing valuable MS tissue for researchers to advance our understanding of the neuropathology of MS.

- At St Vincent's Hospital (Sydney)**
- Dr Gilles Guillemain is surveying a specific molecular pathway for opportunities to assist brain cell repair and survival.
- At the University of Western Australia**
- Dr Alison Jennings is developing the tools to reliably look at minute, molecular changes in the brain.
- At the University of Melbourne**
- Prof Trevor Kilpatrick is uncovering the role of *Gas6*, a protein that could reduce demyelination.
 - Dr Junhua Xiao's insights into how the body myelinates could open new ways to improve the repair process.
 - Dr Scott Kolbe is developing MRI techniques to measure damage to the visual system in the brain. This will allow the reliable testing and comparison of neuroprotective or regenerative therapies.

- At St Vincent's Hospital (Sydney)**
- Prof Bruce Brew is using stem cells to boost the body's natural process to repair damaged neurons.
- At the University of Melbourne/Howard Florey Institute**
- Dr Helmut Butzkueven is developing a platform to test neuroprotective and regenerative medications and initial testing is very promising.
 - Dr Tobias Merson is investigating how the body produces oligodendrocytes to enhance the body's own ability to produce more myelin after an MS attack.
 - Ms Jennifer Sabo is working with a specific protein to determine its ability to enhance normal repair mechanisms to ameliorate MS.
- At the University of Sydney**
- Dr Tailoi Chang-Ling aims to identify the optimum conditions for stem cells to replace damaged neural cells.

Immunology & Virology

- At the University of Queensland**
- Dr Judith Greer is accumulating evidence to support the theory that specific mechanisms lead to the progressive form of MS.
 - Prof Michael Pender is leading the research effort to confirm (or refute) the role of Epstein-Barr Virus as a trigger for MS.
- At the University of Sydney**
- Prof Simon Hawke is scanning for all known viruses lurking in human blood vessels that could be triggering MS.



- At St Vincent's Hospital (Sydney)**
- Dr David Brown is looking closely at a new oral treatment to identify any unforeseen complications.
- At the University of New South Wales**
- Dr Suzanne Hodgkinson's work has identified a population of immune cells that appear to control MS and prevent tissue injury.
- At James Cook University**
- Dr Heinrich Korner is characterising the interactions between *toll-like receptors* and inflammatory cells.
- At the Westmead Millennium Institute**
- Dr Fiona McKay's work illustrates the role of a specific molecule in the development of the progressive form of MS.
- At the University of Melbourne**
- Dr Ann Turnley is looking at a specific protein for its role in the animal model of MS.



Social & Applied Research

- The **MS Life Study** is tracking the quality of life and economic impact of the disease on people with MS.

- At the University of Melbourne**
- Prof Karen Dodd is trialling resistance training to see if it can assist with mobility, independence and well-being.
- At the Curtin University of Technology**
- Prof Tanya Packer is testing an online self-management program to help people with MS manage their fatigue.



Many people are throwing their support behind F5m. Here are just a handful of stories about how people are raising funds...

Just find a bloody cure!

'A colleague with MS had an episode at work and she wasn't able to see and was quite distraught. We tried to talk her through it until her husband arrived. I asked what we could do and she said, 'Just find a bloody cure for this disease.' That's what spurred me on to make a regular donation,' says Hannah.

'I thought, at the moment I can't cure MS but I can help people who are in the position to find a cure.'

A library officer for one of Melbourne's city councils for three years, Hannah was aware that her employer offered a 'workplace giving' program, but hadn't settled on a charity. The distressing event with her colleague made her say 'yes' to MS.

'My grandmother had MS so I've always known about it, and as children we did the MS Readathon. My grandmother's MS was never really explained. It was a case of no one knows what it is but this is what grandma has,' says Hannah.

Hannah's salary deductions to F5m makes it easy for her to help researchers to find a cure for MS. 'I don't even see it and I don't miss the money. It comes straight out of my pay – it's an easy and practical way to give a donation. Sometimes it's hard to find the money at tax time to give a large amount, so breaking it up into fortnightly instalments is great. Even when doing my tax I don't have to worry about the deduction, it's already accounted for. There's nothing to think about and it's tax deductible.'

Mystery Solved!

Margaret Bryce is determined that MS should stand for: Mystery Solved!

And to that end, she's been out rattling the tin for F5m, and she's been making a lot of noise. A morning tea, organised by Margaret and hosted by her employer, the Teachers Federation, raised \$15,440 – a fantastic result! That total included a donation from Teachers Federation Health of \$2,000, and matching funds for the event from the Teachers Federation and Vodafone Foundation. (Vodafone is Graham Bryce's employer, a F5m founding member)

Guest speaker at the event was John Coombs, former Federal Secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia. John made history during the infamous Patrick Stevedores waterfront dispute of 1998. John's son Gary has progressive MS, is confined to his bed, and cannot even scratch his nose. Despite enduring very tough industrial strife, John said: 'I would go through another 10 Patrick disputes if I could have my son cured.'



▶ JOHN COOMBS AT THE TEACHERS FEDERATION MORNING TEA.



▶ ORGANISER NORELLE FEEHAN WITH AVID READERS MAIRE AND GRACE.

Booklovers throw support behind MS

Can you recite the last lines of Dorothea Mackellar's poem My Country? And can you name the book for which Kazuo Ishiguro won the Man Booker Prize in 1989?

Yes? Well there are only 78 questions left to answer in this year's 'Throw the Book at MS', sure to become a favourite national fundraiser for F5m. More than 50 book groups from around the country gathered in private homes and public libraries to answer trivia-style questions on their book knowledge. In all, over \$15,000 was raised.

Organisers Norelle Feehan and Jo Dwyer say they hope to expand the event, and they expect thousands to join in the fun in 2009. 'We post out the questions and answers to interested organisers, so all they have to do is invite their friends and colleagues to come along. It makes fundraising for this great cause so easy and fun,' says Norelle.

To register interest to join next year, contact: throw.the.book@hotmail.com

Coming up

The Trish Foundation's Crystal Ball in Sydney has sold out for the past three years so be quick to book your tickets for this gala event at Darling Harbour on 20 Sept. Tickets are \$160 each (dress circle tables for 10 at \$2,100) for a fabulous three-course meal, drinks and entertainment. For the hottest ticket in town call 02 9403 3320.

Music, Soul & Laughter are promised at **Rio Carnivale** in Melbourne on 22 Nov. Tickets at \$150 will see you samba the night away with great entertainment and food included. Bookings through Jessica Lightfoot on 0408 090 719.

These are not all the events that F5m has on the go. Check out our website for updates www.F5m.org.au You can see what all our everyday heroes are doing on www.everydayhero.com.au

Eureka!

Finalists in the Australian Museum's annual Eureka Awards were announced at the Australian Museum in Sydney on July 24. One of the prestigious awards is in recognition of MS research.



The two finalists for the NSW Office for Science and Medical Research Jamie Callachor Eureka Prize for Medical Research are Dr David Booth and Professor Trevor Kilpatrick. The prize of \$10,000 is awarded for outstanding, groundbreaking medical research in MS.

A research scientist with the Westmead Millennium Institute, Dr David Booth, has made one of the most significant advances in MS research in recent years. He has identified the association between a gene receptor IL-7R α and MS; found the differences between the genetic variants that are likely to affect susceptibility to MS; and devised a new therapeutic strategy to treat MS based on his discoveries.

Professor Trevor Kilpatrick is both the Director of the Centre for Neuroscience at the University of Melbourne and the Leader of the MS Group at the Howard Florey Institute. The work of Professor Kilpatrick's group has led to a better understanding of brain repair in MS. The group has discovered fundamental brain responses that can either worsen or improve MS-related brain damage, and they are now searching for new treatments to repair this damage.

Who's missing out?

Addressing the issue of 'non-adherence', a population of MS patients in southern Tasmania has been part of a study looking at lifestyle factors that influence how regularly a person takes their MS drug.

Dr Helen Tremlett from Canada, working with Ingrid Van der Mei from the Menzies Institute (Tasmania) has shown that by just asking patients whether they've missed any doses in the last month can help flag which patients might be chronic non-adherers in the future.

In addition, people with MS consuming more alcoholic drinks are at a higher risk of missing their doses. Alcohol consumption might also help identify which patients may benefit from positive encouragement to take their medication regularly.

The study was recently published in the journal of *Pharmacoepidemiology and Drug Safety* (2008). The results hold implications for MS care providers and the design of future clinical trials.

Regular dosage is considered such a major factor that the World Health Organisation says 'Increasing adherences may have a far greater impact on the health of the population than any improvement in specific medical treatments'.

Simple enquiries about alcohol intake and missed doses may lead to constructive counselling. For clinical trials, identifying those who are casual about their treatment regime could impact the quality of the clinical results.

The Longitudinal Study of Multiple Sclerosis in Southern Tasmania was funded by the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council and the Trish MS Research Foundation.

MSRA Multiple Sclerosis Research Australia

MSRA	The Campaign Coordinator	Ph: 02 9468 8390
	PO Box 1246	Local Call: 1300 356 467
	Chatswood NSW 2057	E-mail: info@msra.org.au
	Australia	Web: www.msra.org.au

MSRA Partners



Yes, I want to help MS Research Australia

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OR I have enclosed my: Cheque/Money Order payable to MS Research Australia.

I want to support MS Research Australia on an ongoing basis, please charge \$ _____ to my credit card per month until notified.



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