80TH ANNIVERSARY
SPECIAL EDITION

# LifeLab

The latest news from **QIMR Berghofer**

ISSUE 123 | SUMMER 2025

## World-first treatment for potentially deadly graft-versus-host disease

Clearing the air on the potential link between bushfire exposure and dementia

Brain study reveals genetic links to Parkinson's disease and ADHD

QIMR Berghofer

80 years of pioneering medical research

# LifeLab

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## Message from the Director

Welcome to this special collector's edition of LifeLab as we celebrate 80 years of QIMR Berghofer, a remarkable achievement which reflects our enduring commitment to the health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders.

Since our humble beginnings in 1945, we have grown into a world-class medical research institute with more than 60 research groups and laboratories. To mark this significant anniversary, in the first of a special four-part series we will reflect on our first 20 years starting from the very first lab in a modest army hut at Victoria Park in Herston. It's a wonderful and nostalgic read.

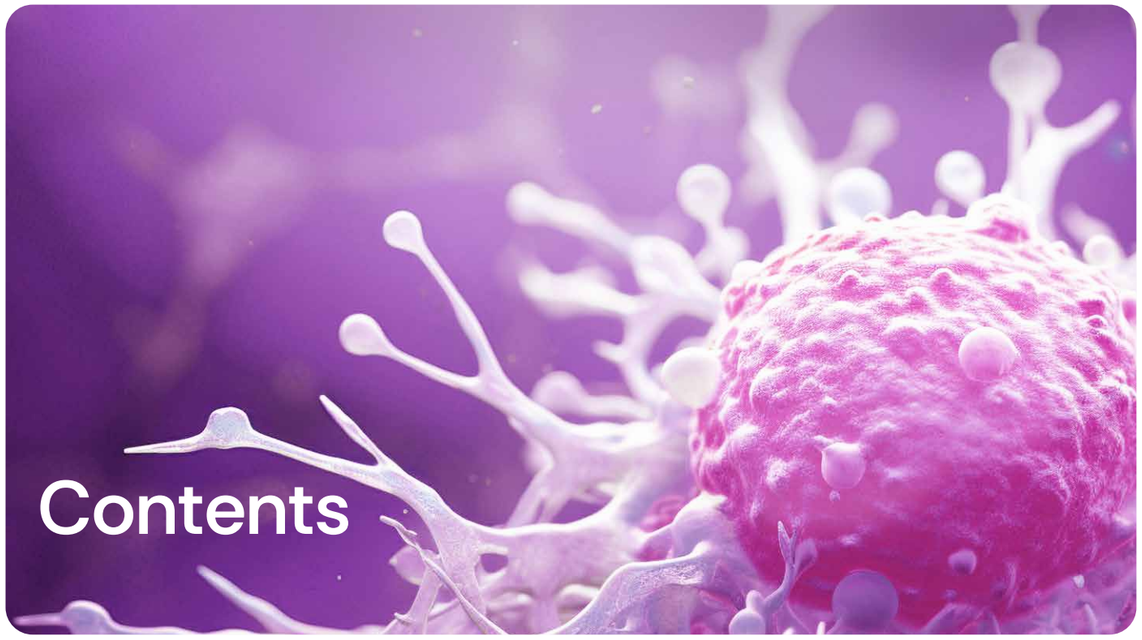
You may have noticed that LifeLab has a new look. As part of our anniversary, we are unveiling a brand refresh which includes a new name, logo, and website. From late January, our official name will change from QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute to simply QIMR Berghofer. Along with this, we are excited to unveil our new logo and website, which will be accessible at qimrb.edu.au. You will soon see all these changes reflected in communications and new signage on our buildings along Herston Road.

This edition is packed with exciting research and discoveries that could impact health across the globe. Our cover story looks at the Queensland origins behind a new drug for the potentially deadly graft-versus-host disease, which was recently approved for treatment in the United States. I am so proud that this potentially life-changing drug came from a breakthrough discovery led by Dr Kelli MacDonald and her team, right here at QIMR Berghofer more than ten years ago.

This edition also includes an update on the world's largest study of brain volume, involving a staggering 76,000 participants across 19 countries. Led by Associate Professor Miguel Rentería, the study has revealed genetic links between brain volume and conditions including Parkinson's disease and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

I hope you enjoy this special edition of LifeLab and share in our pride at celebrating 80 years of ground-breaking health and medical discoveries that genuinely change lives, both here in Queensland and around the world. On behalf of everyone at QIMR Berghofer, thank you for your continued support and commitment to medical research.

Professor Fabienne Mackay
Director and CEO



# Contents



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FEATURE


# GVHD drug breakthrough

A new treatment for potentially deadly graft-versus-host disease (GVHD) has been more than ten years in the making.

A discovery by QIMR Berghofer researchers has led to the development and approval of a new treatment for chronic graft-versus-host disease (GVHD), the major cause of serious complications and death in blood cancer patients who receive vital stem cell transplants.

The United States Federal Drug Administration (FDA) has fast-tracked approval of a drug based on the lab findings of QIMR Berghofer researcher Dr Kelli MacDonald's team, a decade after their breakthrough discovery of an antibody that could prevent chronic GVHD.

Rigorous clinical trials have shown the FDA-approved treatment, known as Axatilamab, successfully suppresses harmful immune cells, preventing the development of chronic GVHD. These results have been published in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*.

The drug is expected to meet the urgent needs of a large proportion of patients with chronic GVHD who fail to respond to initial steroid-based therapy.

"This is an important and exciting development for people with GVHD and has been over a decade in the making from our initial research," Dr MacDonald said.

▶ WATCH

Watch a video about this research.

## What is GVHD?

**GVHD occurs when transplanted cells attack the recipient's organs and tissues and cause scarring.**

**This leads to debilitating and often long-lasting health problems, particularly in the skin and lungs.**

## The bench to bedside journey

**2011**

Research into chronic GVHD begins in Dr Kelli MacDonald's lab at QIMR Berghofer.

**2014**

Dr MacDonald's research is published in *The Journal of Clinical Investigation*.

**2018**

Clinical trials begin.

**2023**

Strong Phase II results for Axatilamab, first-in-class treatment for chronic GVHD, reported at American Society of Haematology meeting.

**2024**

FDA approval is granted to use Axatilimab for chronic GVHD.

Phase 2 study results are published in *New England Journal of Medicine*.

## Bench to bedside

The term "bench to bedside" refers to the journey from research being conducted in a laboratory "bench" through to its meaningful use to treating patients at the "bedside".

The research that lead to the world first treatment of chronic GVHD began in 2011, in Dr Kelli MacDonald's lab, where Dr Kylie Alexander and a team of researchers identified both the cellular process causing chronic GVHD, and the antibody that could block this process and prevent the disease's development.

> It really is a dream to see your research progress from the laboratory to improve the outcome of patients."
>
> – DR KELLI MACDONALD

"The ability of our research to lead to new drug approval really emphasises the importance and quality of the expertise in transplant immunology, developed over two decades at QIMR Berghofer.

It also highlights the persistence and timeframes needed to understand and address clinical problems in the lab," Dr MacDonald says.

"Until recently, there has been no satisfactory treatment for people affected by this debilitating condition which causes inflammation and fibrosis in tissues throughout the body. However, this new treatment has significantly reduced symptoms in up to 75 per cent of patients."

Healthcare providers will soon be able to access full prescribing information on the FDA's website as the drug becomes available in the USA. It is not yet known when the treatment will become available in Australia.

> I'm incredibly proud that a world-first, pre-clinical discovery made right here in Brisbane is having such a tangible impact on the lives of patients across the world."
>
> – DR KELLI MACDONALD

Bone marrow or stem cell transplants are critical, life-saving treatments for blood cancer patients, but helping those who suffer the complication of chronic GVHD has been a major unmet need.

"This approval is a big step forward for people dealing with the challenges of chronic GVHD and offers a new option for those who have struggled to find effective treatment," Dr MacDonald said.

FEATURE

# Celebrating 80 years of medical research in Queensland

As we celebrate QIMR Berghofer's 80th, we're taking a nostalgic look back at the events and people who have shaped medical research in Queensland.

In the first of a four-part series across the year, we're looking at the Institute's first two decades.

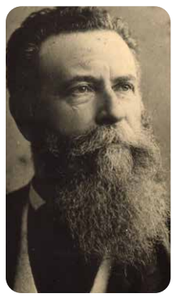
QIMR Berghofer

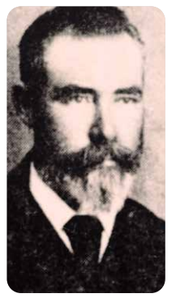
## A new look for the future

As we celebrate eight decades of impact, we're also looking forward to the next chapter with excitement as we unveil a new look for the Institute.

From late January, we will be known simply as QIMR Berghofer and you will see our new logo appearing across our communications and signage on our buildings on Herston Road.

Visit our brand new website at **www.qimrb.edu.au** for everything about the Institute including all our latest news and information about 80th celebrations.





*Left to right: Joseph Bancroft and son Thomas Bancroft.*

*The bacterial infection leptospirosis, also known as the 'canecutter's curse' was affecting farm workers in North Queensland.*

## Medical research in Queensland pre-QIMR Berghofer

Prior to what we now know as QIMR Berghofer, medical research in Queensland was piecemeal and sporadic.

Dr Joseph Bancroft was one of the early pioneers, with his discovery in 1876 of Wucheria bancrofti, a mosquito-borne parasitic roundworm which can cause the tropical disease lymphatic filariasis. Joseph's son Thomas Bancroft identified in the early 1900s that dengue fever was also transmitted by mosquitoes.

There were medical facilities in Townsville, Cairns and Rockhampton in the early 1900s, but their primary purpose was quarantine and localised clinical and preventative services, not research.

### 1940s

1945: A Bill was introduced in Queensland Parliament to establish The Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR). QIMR was the brainchild of Dr Edward Derrick, a Director of the Queensland State Health Department Laboratory of Microbiology and Pathology.

Dr Derrick's research on Q fever, malaria and scrub typhus made him aware of the need for an institute devoted to the unique health problems occurring in Queensland.

"If we do not investigate these, no other country can do it for us," Dr Derrick said.

QIMR was established in Victoria Park within a row of disused temporary buildings. Hut 8 was an old World War II US Army hut purchased from the Commonwealth for the bargain price of £1,840, located close to what was then the Brisbane General Hospital.

The Institute started with just seven staff and much of the Institute's early work during this period leaned heavily towards zoonoses – infectious diseases of animals that could be spread to humans.

*The hut at Victoria Park, the first home of QIMR Berghofer.*

*Blood tests were done in the field in North Queensland by QIMR Berghofer researchers.*

### 1950s

1951: A field station was established in Innisfail, about 260km north of Townsville, to look at diseases endemic in the area and ways to control, cure or prevent them. Particular attention was given to three main ailments – leptospirosis (also known as canecutter's curse), scrub typhus, and dengue.

*The field station at Innisfail in 1951.*

### 1960s

Researchers studying the increase in mosquito-borne viruses established evidence of a distinct virus. It was named Ross River virus by lead investigator and then-Institute Director Professor Ralph Doherty, after the Townsville site in which the mosquitoes were found.

*Mosquito control was an early focus for researchers under Institute Director Professor Ralph Doherty.*

## Pioneers of QIMR Berghofer

### Dr Edward (Ted) Derrick

First Deputy Director whose persistent lobbying for a dedicated medical research organisation in Queensland led to the establishment of QIMR.

### Ian Cook and Pauline Pope

Cadet scientists and part of the founding team at the Institute.

### Dr Ian Mackerras

Founding Director and entomologist, Dr Mackerras led the Australian Army's malaria control work in Papua New Guinea during World War II. Dr Mackerras was married to fellow researcher and parasitologist, Dr Josephine Mackerras.

### Dr Josephine Mackerras (née Bancroft)

Senior parasitologist who identified that cockroaches were responsible for transmitting salmonella after a gastroenteritis epidemic among infants in Brisbane. Dr Mackerras was a descendent of the pioneering medical research Bancroft family, and married to founding director, Dr Ian Mackerras.

FEATURE

# Brain volume study reveals genetic links to Parkinson's disease and ADHD

The world's largest study of brain volume involved the brain scans of more than 76,000 participants across 19 countries.

"These findings suggest that genetic influences that underpin individual differences in brain structure may be fundamental to understanding the underlying causes of brain–related disorders."

– ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR MIGUEL RENTERÍA

Ground-breaking research led by QIMR Berghofer scientists has discovered hundreds of genetic variants involved in brain size which are also found in people with brain conditions including Parkinson's disease and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

The study, published in the prestigious journal *Nature Genetics*, is the world's largest investigation into how genetic differences influence structures of the 'deep' brain, and provides an insight into the intricate relationship between our genetic makeup and brain health.

QIMR Berghofer researcher Associate Professor Miguel Rentería says the findings show that some of the same genetic variants that influence brain structure also influence the risk of brain-related conditions such as Parkinson's disease and ADHD.

"There is strong evidence that Parkinson's and ADHD have a biological basis, and this research is a necessary step to understanding and eventually treating these conditions more effectively," he said.

To conduct the research, an international team of 189 researchers, led by Associate Professor Rentería and Dr Luis García-Marín, analysed DNA data and brain MRI scans from 76,000 participants across 19 countries.

Associate Professor Rentería and his team observed 254 genetic variants which can influence the size of people's brain structure, and then studied whether some of these variants are also implicated in the risk of developmental, psychiatric, and neurological disorders.

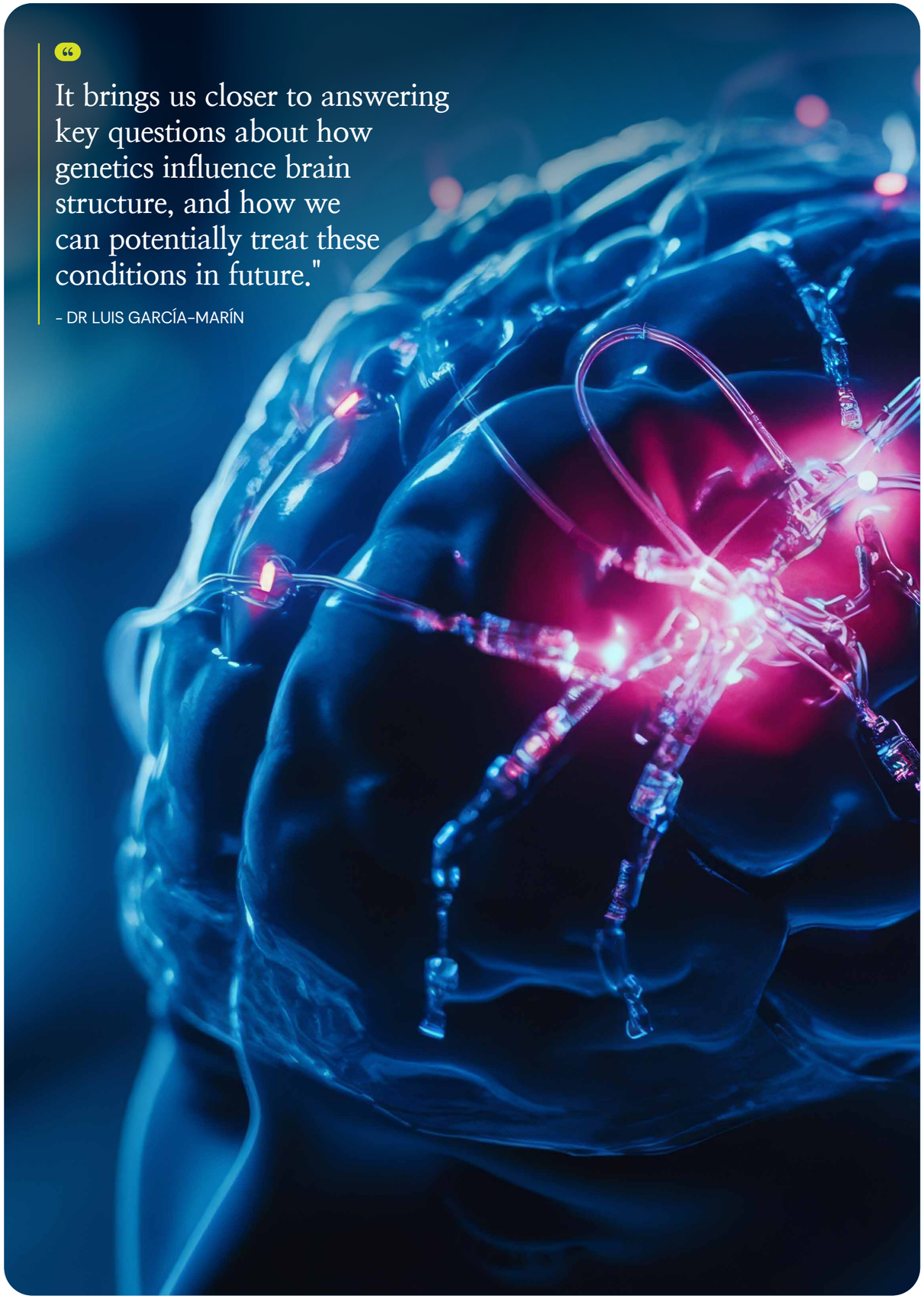
"Genetic variants associated with larger brain volumes in key brain regions also increase the risk of Parkinson's disease, while variants linked to smaller brain volumes in key regions are associated with an increased risk of ADHD. It's worth noting that these are correlations, not causal relationships, and so interpretation must be approached with caution," he said.

Dr García-Marín said the research advanced our understanding of the brain's development, variability, and evolution.

"It brings us closer to answering key questions about how genetics influence brain structure, and how we can potentially treat these conditions in future," he said.

The genetic effects on brain structure were consistent across people of European, African and Asian ancestry, highlighting the universal importance of genetic factors in brain development and function.

The study focused on subcortical brain structures including the hippocampus, amygdala, thalamus, caudate nucleus, nucleus accumbens, putamen, and globus pallidus. These subcortical structures are crucial for various brain functions, including memory formation, how we respond to reward and punishment, emotional regulation, motor control, and sensory processing.



# Clearing the air on the link between bushfire smoke exposure and dementia

How a study could help understand the potential impact of bushfire smoke exposure on brain health and help identify who could be at greatest risk.

Dementia is the second leading cause of death for all Australians, and is on track to take the number one spot as our leading killer. The number of Australians living with the disease is rising rapidly, while at the same time we are increasingly being exposed to bushfire smoke, even in city areas, thanks to warming temperatures and more extreme weather events.

Researchers at QIMR Berghofer are urgently calling for funds to study the potential link between the two.

The adverse health impacts of bushfire smoke exposure on our respiratory and cardiovascular systems are well established, but little is known about what it does to our brains. There is a critical knowledge gap.

There is evidence that bushfire smoke exposure is associated with an increased risk of diminished brain health, dementia and brain inflammation, but research is needed to fully understand this link.

The most vulnerable include Australians aged over 50 years, our children, those living with or susceptible to neurodegenerative diseases like dementia, and of course, our frontline rural volunteer firefighters.

Associate Professor Michelle Lupton, her research team and collaborators are determined to clear the air on the link between bushfire smoke and brain health impacts.

They have designed a study that will, for the first time, examine rural firefighters who are at the forefront of long-term bushfire smoke exposure.

The study will include surveying volunteer firefighters for health information, measuring historical bushfire smoke exposure to PM2.5, carrying out extensive cognitive testing, and analysing blood samples for biomarkers of brain inflammation and early-stage dementia.

This research could help these community heroes who selflessly protect others, to mitigate their own risk. And with their help, the findings could also ensure early detection and intervention for all Australians to protect their brain health.

> By knowing more we can better help those who are vulnerable and seek treatments and interventions that could help, prevent, or delay disease progression."
>
> – ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR MICHELLE LUPTON



**In the 2019-2020 Black Summer megafires**

**80%** Australia's population exposed to bushfire smoke

**10X** the recommended safe air quality levels

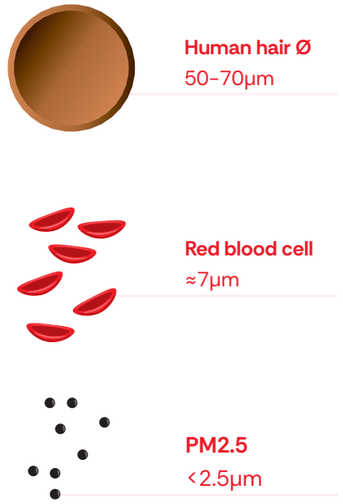
## Invisible killer

Bushfire smoke is largely made up of tiny particles of ash and other toxic materials.

The tiniest of these particles are called PM2.5, particulate matter measuring less than 2.5 micrometres across, too small to see without a powerful microscope.

PM2.5 particles are smaller than a red blood cell, and 30 times smaller than the diameter of a human hair.

They can be inhaled, enter the bloodstream, and possibly even damage the blood-brain barrier.




## How you can help

Your donation will help deliver urgently needed research into the link between bushfire smoke exposure and dementia.

**Raising $374,000 will allow Michelle's team to study 1,800 volunteer firefighters in order to better understand the potential impacts of bushfire smoke on brain health, and identify who could be at greatest risk.**

Scan the QR code to make a donation, read more information, and see video content.

Alternatively, visit **www.qimrb.edu.au/clear-the-air** or call 1800 993 000.

## On the front line

There's a spirit of generosity and volunteering in small communities all around Australia.

It comes from people like Graham and Geraldine (Gel), who moved to a small town from the city 35 years ago seeking a more relaxed lifestyle to raise their family. Selfless, courageous, caring, and so humble they'd never let you describe them like that.

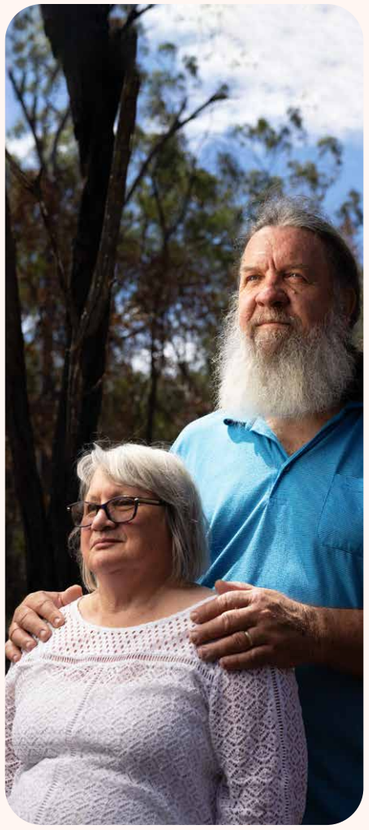
The couple spent decades volunteering as rural firefighters. As they put it, it's just what you do when you're part of a community. You help each other.

Graham's many years of distinguished service have been recognised with numerous awards, including the prestigious Australian Fire Service Medal.

Gel fought her fair share of fires too. She and the other women volunteers would jump in the old Bedford truck to tackle a blaze during the day when their husbands were at work.

As the first line of defence to protect people and property, rural firefighters are on the frontline of exposure to bushfire smoke. It's why Graham and Gel feel so strongly about supporting Associate Professor Lupton's study by volunteering their time again – this time, as study participants.

> When we're looking at a fire, we're thinking all the time about how to mitigate any risk. That's how I see this research. It's about getting the best information, the latest evidence to make sure we can keep people out of harm's way."
>
> — GRAHAM, VOLUNTEER RURAL FIREFIGHTER



# New therapy aims to tackle and prevent aggressive brain cancer

QIMR Berghofer researchers have developed super-charged immune cells to improve glioblastoma survival rates and prevent recurrence of the deadly brain cancer.

This therapy specifically targets cancer stem cells to prevent disease recurrence, which would be a breakthrough for patients with this deadly disease."

– PROFESSOR RAJIV KHANNA

Researchers at QIMR Berghofer have developed a promising CAR T cell immunotherapy that is genetically engineered to target and destroy glioblastoma cancer cells.

Lead researcher Professor Rajiv Khanna AO said early pre-clinical results suggested that the CAR T cells could kill tumour cells and potentially prevent the cancer returning.

"Primary brain cancer can often be managed if recurrence is prevented. Unfortunately, once brain cancer recurs, the current life expectancy is typically less than six months. Our goal is to prevent recurrence by treating the disease at its earliest stage," Professor Khanna said.

The results have been published in the prestigious *Journal of ImmunoTherapy for Cancer*.

The CAR T cells are equipped with a special tool that successfully helps them find and attack a protein called EphA3, which is commonly found in glioblastoma tumours.

Dr Paulo Martins from QIMR Berghofer said this method could also be a game changer in the treatment of other cancers.

"This new approach could also help fight other EphA3-positive cancers including breast, lung, prostate, melanoma, and some blood cancers, by preventing metastatic or recurrent tumours," Dr Martins said.

These findings are hugely encouraging for the future of cancer treatment. Pre-clinical results suggest that these killer CAR T cells can eliminate treatment-resistant tumour cells within the brain by attaching to and destroying newly-formed cancerous blood vessels and stem cells."

– PROFESSOR RAJIV KHANNA

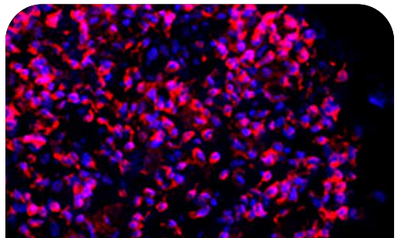
QIMR Berghofer will advance the development of the EphA3 CAR T cells, in the hope they will ultimately be offered as an "off-the-shelf" immunotherapy for wider patient access and affordability.

The research is still in the early stages and is expected to proceed to a phase 1 clinical trial of the therapy, involving patients with EphA3-positive glioblastoma.

The trial will be conducted in collaboration with neurosurgeon Professor David Walker from the Newro Foundation and Briz Brain & Spine and is expected to start within the next year.

"Our long-term goal is to take this cell therapy from early phase development right through to the clinic, helping to save lives," Professor Khanna said.

The treatment was tested in pre-clinical models including patient-derived glioblastoma organoids (a three-dimensional, mini-organ made from human cells and tissue).



## What is glioblastoma?

Glioblastoma is the most common type of primary brain cancer in adults.

Despite increasingly aggressive treatments incorporating surgical removal of tumours followed by concurrent radiotherapy and chemotherapy, survival rates for glioblastoma patients have only seen modest improvements over recent decades.

No cure is available and, if untreated, glioblastoma can result in death in six months or less.

**WATCH**

Watch the video about this research.

## What is a CAR T cell?

T cells are the soldiers of our immune system but to be more effective against cancer, they can be supercharged with a smart gene called a chimeric antigen receptor, or "CAR".

The CAR is engineered for a specific type of cancer.

**STEP 1**

Identify a target or antigen that is present on the cancer but not on vital organs or tissue.

**STEP 2**

Design a binder to lock on to that cancer target.

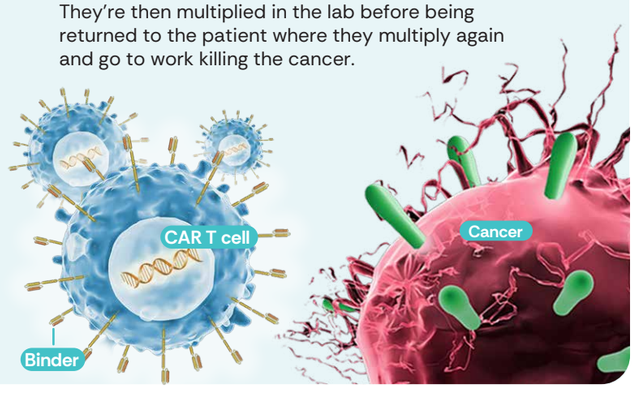
**STEP 3**

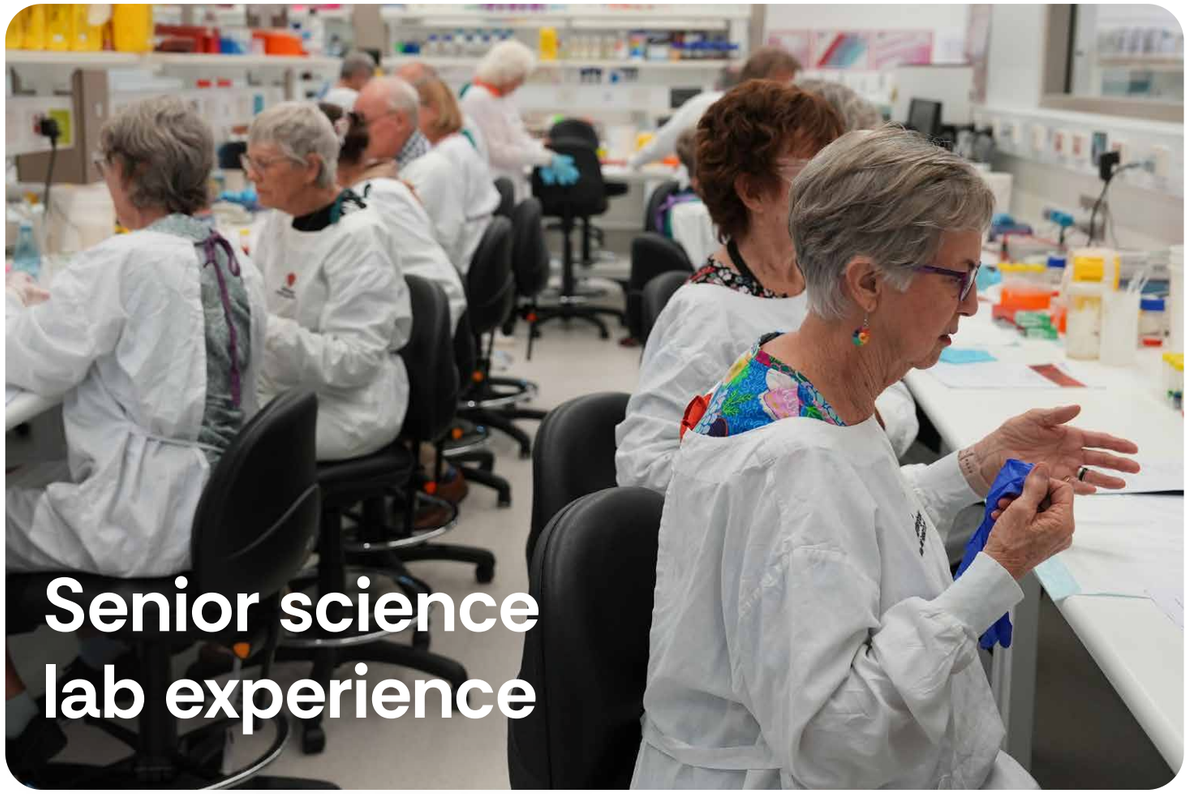
Engineer the CAR with a signalling system to instruct the T cells how to kill the cancer.

The newly designed CAR gene is cloned and inserted into the patient's own T cells using a harmless virus.

The result are CAR T cells.

They're then multiplied in the lab before being returned to the patient where they multiply again and go to work killing the cancer.





# Senior science lab experience

About 45 seniors donned lab coats, gloves and goggles to conduct experiments in our purpose-built Education Laboratory before heading out to see the real deal – our scientists working to prevent and treat dozens of deadly and debilitating illnesses.

The event offered an opportunity for visiting seniors to learn about the history of QIMR Berghofer, its role in shaping the health of people in Queensland and beyond, and the importance of donations for furthering medical research.

This event was made possible thanks to generous support from the Queensland Government and COTA Queensland, as part of Seniors Month.

**Want to join us on our next senior science lab experience?**

Email us: **events@qimrb.edu.au** and ask to go on the waitlist.

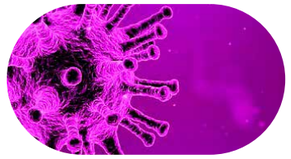
*Left to right: Education Coordinator Dr Manuel Serrano Santos speaks to seniors in QIMR Berghofer's purpose-built Education Laboratory before participants conduct real life experiments.*



# Clinical Trials and Studies

Rigorous testing through clinical trials ensures that new health interventions are safe, effective and improve the lives of patients.

Here are some of the clinical trials and studies currently underway.

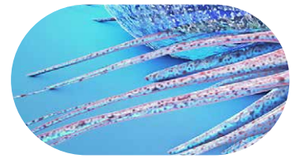


## Inflection and Inflammation

- Phase 1 trial of T-cell therapy for COVID-19
- Phase 1 volunteer infection study of Ruxolitinib to boost immunity to malaria parasites
- Phase 1 trial of T-cell therapy for viral infections in transplant recipients
- Phase 1 trial of T-cell therapy to prevent viral disease in children post-transplant
- A pilot study to characterise the in vivo safety and infectivity of an in vitro expanded Plasmodium knowlesi YH1-HS master cell bank in healthy participants
- TCaP Phase I & II: Phase I/II clinical trial of allogeneic cytomegalovirus-specific T cells in combination with pembrolizumab for recurrent and newly diagnosed glioblastoma multiforme
- A pilot volunteer infection study to determine the utility of the plasmodium falciparum 3D7-MBE008 master cell bank in assessing malaria transmission blocking interventions.

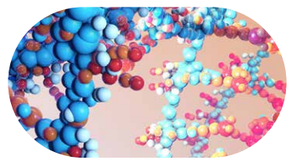
## Brain and Mental Health

- Deep Brain Stimulation for OCD
- PARTING: Psilocybin-Assisted suppoRtive psychoTherapy IN the treatment of complicated Grief feasibility trial
- Cadence Discovery: A trial of a food additive for the treatment of schizophrenia
- Pilot RCT of a cognitive behavioural family intervention for reducing bullying victimisation and mental illness of adolescents
- ELITE: ELectroencephalography In the neonaTE: Seizure detection
- Modulation of Brain Network Activity in Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder using Low-Intensity Focused Ultrasound.



## Cancer Research

- PRoCESS: Pancreatic cancer Relatives Counselling and Education Support Service trial
- PROMISE: Patient Reported Outcome Measures in cancer care: a hybrid effectiveness-Implementation trial to optimise Symptom control and health service Experience.



## Population Health

- The Sun-D Trial: the effect of high SPF sunscreen application on vitamin D
- D-Health: high-dose vitamin D supplementation for prevention of mortality and cancer in Australian adults aged 60-79.

## Want to participate?

If you are interested in participating in any of the trials or studies, please scan the QR code or visit **www.qimrb.edu.au/our-research/clinical-trials-and-research-studies**

# Celebrating awards and honours

We are proud to share news of some recent accolades for our scientists.

## Fellowship honour for glaucoma test geneticist

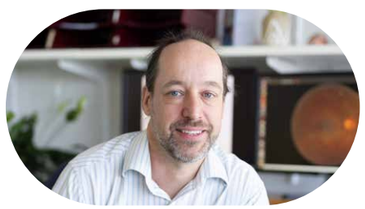
Statistical geneticist Professor Stuart MacGregor has been elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences.

His recent work has led to the development and commercialisation of a genetic test for glaucoma, serving as a model for future genetics-based prediction of risk across a wide range of complex human diseases.

Professor MacGregor said he was delighted and honoured to be elected as a Fellow.

"Developing a simple saliva test for glaucoma will help speed up the diagnosis and treatment of this debilitating disease. With enthusiastic community support we are now commencing clinical trials to assess the impact the saliva test may have in preventing blindness from glaucoma," he said.

Professor MacGregor began his association with QIMR Berghofer in 2005. He is now Senior Group Leader and Principal Research Fellow at QIMR Berghofer's Statistical Genetics Lab.



LISTEN

BODY LAB

Find out more about Professor James Hudson's research in this episode of our BodyLab podcast.

Body Lab is a monthly podcast, produced by QIMR Berghofer, highlighting the work of our researchers.

Click on the image to listen and/or subscribe


## Be part of our glaucoma study

Professor MacGregor's team needs participants to be part of their Genetics of Glaucoma Study.

If you are aged 50-65, without glaucoma but have a family history of the disease, please click on the image above or visit **qimrb.edu.au/clinical-trials-and-research-studies/genetics-of-glaucoma-study** for more information.

## Prestigious honour for leading 'tiny hearts' scientist

Professor James Hudson received the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences Jian Zhou Medal for his transformative research advancing the understanding of heart disease and development of new treatments.

Professor Hudson was presented with the medal at the Academy's gala dinner in Adelaide in October. The prestigious medal is awarded annually to recognise rising stars in Australian health and medical science.

Professor Hudson and his team at QIMR Berghofer's Cardiac Bioengineering Laboratory create tiny, living and beating model human heart muscles to help unravel the complex workings of the heart and identify new treatments for heart disease.

He is internationally recognised for improving these cardiac organoids to more closely mimic the human heart, providing increasingly accurate miniature 3D models to study disease and screen new drugs.

## Exceptional award for up-and-coming scientist

Dr Luis García-Marín has been awarded the Australian Institute of Policy and Science (AIPS) 2024 Florey Next Generation Award.

The award is conferred to a current PhD candidate who has demonstrated outstanding capability, creativity and potential in the biomedical sciences and/or health and medical research.

Applicants are also assessed on research engagement and communication skills.

Dr García-Marín is a researcher in the computational neurogenomics lab at QIMR Berghofer and his research shines a light on how our genes, brain structure, behaviour and mental health are interconnected. He was recently first author on a landmark Nature Genetics paper.

## Clive Berghofer Humanitarian Awards

Two outstanding members of our community were named recipients of the Clive Berghofer Humanitarian Awards, in recognition of their support of the Institute.

The annual Clive Berghofer Humanitarian Awards recognise people or groups within the community who actively raise awareness and/or revenue for the Institute and our research programs. It is named after former Toowoomba mayor and property developer and major Institute benefactor Clive Berghofer AM.

## Elisabeth Weise

Elisabeth (pictured above) was recognised for her longstanding and significant donations to research at QIMR Berghofer since 2014.

Born in Germany, Elisabeth was given the opportunity to work at a research centre in Frankfurt as assistant to the CEO. This piqued her interest in and desire to give back to science.

Elisabeth's donations have directly supported Professor Rachel Neale's pancreatic cancer research, Associate Professor Tracy O'Mara's endometrial cancer research, Associate Professor Michelle Wykes' Masterswitch cancer research, Professor Sudha Rao's long COVID research, Associate Professor Severine Navarro's asthma research and haemochromatosis research.

Elisabeth is also a member of the Bancroft Society.

## Margaret Pemberton Foundation

Gary Pemberton, representing the Margaret Pemberton Foundation, was recognised for the foundation's significant support of research into paediatric brain cancer, AI-assisted neuro-monitoring of infants and paediatric sleep since 2021.

Elisabeth and Gary were presented with their awards at the annual QIMR Berghofer Staff Awards event in December. Thank you both for your valuable contribution to ongoing medical research.

# Thank you

We are very grateful for those in the community that support and fundraise for us.

We couldn't do it without you.

## Bancroft High Tea

Recently we were honoured to host members of The Bancroft Society, sharing our latest research outcomes and indulging in a special high tea.

The Bancroft Society is made up of generous individuals who have included a gift to the Institute in their will. It is named after the Bancroft family who pioneered medical research in Queensland from the 1860s.

Gifts in wills, both large and small, play a vital role in funding research that is crucial to the future health of our society.

Our guests heard from Institute Director and CEO Professor Fabienne Mackay, Professor Stuart MacGregor, who has developed a genetic test to predict glaucoma risk, and Dr Siok Tey, who is leading research into a potential new immunotherapy for seriously ill blood cancer patients.

We are incredibly grateful to the members of The Bancroft Society for their support.

*Members of the Bancroft Society joined us for a special high tea.*

*Dr Lachlan Harris joined Bancroft Society members to discuss his latest research.*

For more information on leaving a gift in your will and a legacy to fund the development of important medical research visit **www.qimrb.edu.au** or call 1800 993 000.

*Guests were invited to place their donor plaque on our Wall of Appreciation, a special acknowledgment of their valuable contribution to advancing medical research.*

## Thanks for Giving

Our annual Thanks for Giving event brought together some of our most generous donors in recognition of their support of medical research.

Guests at the November event heard from Director and CEO Professor Fabienne Mackay, Chief Operating Officer Dr Stephen Weller, and a panel of scientists who answered questions about current research.

It was a wonderful opportunity for guests to learn more about the real world impact of their support.



## Running Mountains for Research

A big thank you to Lewis Wigington (pictured above) who raised $5,625 for research and awareness of Spinocerebellar Ataxia Type 6 (SCA6), a neurodegenerative condition that affects his family. Lewis ran the Kosci 100, a 100km track to the summit of Australia's highest peak, Mt Kosciuszko.

The valuable funds Lewis has raised will support research aimed at reducing the debilitating symptoms of SCA6 through Associate Professor Ian Harding's Cerebellum and Neurodegeneration Research Group.

## An afternoon with Breast Friends

Our Director and CEO Professor Mackay and Community Fundraising Officer Joseph Stewart were honoured to attend the Breast Friends Afternoon Out at Victoria Park Golf Complex.

Professor Mackay updated attendees on the impactful breast cancer research underway at the Institute and highlighted the direct impact that Breast Friends have had as loyal community fundraisers since 2016.

Breast Friends was founded by Marilyn Graham and Virginia Irwin together with long-time QIMR Berghofer community fundraiser, Tricia Mahoney.

The founders' personal journeys with breast cancer inspired them to create a fundraising community in pursuit of a cancer-free future.

We are tremendously grateful for community fundraisers like Breast Friends. They're an inspiration to anyone who wants to make a difference through fundraising.

*Sam Pym, Claire Mason and Michelle Snell.*


*Professor Mackay addressing the event.*


*Virginia Irwin, Professor Mackay, Tricia Mahoney, Marilyn Graham, Kellie Riordan.*

*Photography: Decadent Photography*

## Fundraise for medical research

Are you looking for a way to make a difference in medical research? For more information about fundraising, scan the QR code, or visit **www.qimrb.edu.au/support-us/community-fundraising**

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## Post the form

Please post the form to:
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## Other ways to donate

**Online**
Scan the QR code, or
visit www.qimrb.edu.au

**Phone**
Free call: 1800 993 000
Monday to Friday, 8:30am-4:00pm AEST

**Direct Deposit**
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# Challenge yourself and trek for good

Embark on an unforgettable journey along the iconic Larapinta Trail while raising funds for life-changing medical research.

Join QIMR Berghofer's 'Trailblazers' group and trek the iconic Larapinta Trail. This is more than just a trek. It's a journey of purpose, inspiration and hope for the future through science.

The trek will be with expert guides from Inspired Adventures, who have more than 20 years' experience in adventures for those who also want to raise money and awareness to make the world a better place.

**Highlights**

- Trek the spectacular West MacDonnell Ranges, Ormiston Gorge, Finke River, Mount Sonder and Glen Helen Gorge;
- Explore the traditional folklore areas of Carpet Snake, Emu and Kangaroo Man Dreaming, and the landscapes that inspired famous indigenous artist Albert Namatjira;
- Experience a traditional Welcome to Country and enjoy an authentic Kungkas Can Cook tasting platter;
- Raise vital funds for life-changing medical research.

## Larapinta Trail, Northern Territory
## 27 July – 1 August 2025

For more information on joining the QIMR Berghofer Trailblazers team on this unforgettable trip, scan the QR code, or visit www.inspiredadventures.com.au/event/qimrberghofer-larapinta-2025/