



The University  
of Sydney

# KOLLING

Medical research *matters*<sup>TM</sup>



Royal North  
Shore Hospital

Friends of Kolling Community Newsletter

Summer Edition 2009

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(Above) Kevin Rudd and Nicola Roxon visit Royal North Shore Hospital.  
Photo: (AAP) Dean Lewins

## Prime Minister visits Kolling

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon and Health Reform Commission Chairwoman Christine Bennett visited the new Kolling Building at Royal North Shore Hospital to address a forum debating the recommendations of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission.



## In bed with John Howard

**All Saints** star John Howard (pictured with co-star Mirrah Foulkes) recently visited Kolling as part of the Mitochondrial Awareness Day. Assoc. Professor Carolyn Sue and her team at the Kolling Institute are working to understand inherited neurological disorders with a focus on mitochondrial function and movement disorders (eg. Parkinson's disease).

John Howard played Dr Frank Campion in the popular medical TV series on Channel 7.

**Help discover tomorrow's treatments, preventions and cures.**



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## Director's Voice

2009 has been a very eventful year

for the Kolling Institute: our first year in the new Kolling Building. It's very gratifying to see the Institute in such an outstanding facility after 80 years in its previous accommodation. Kolling researchers continue to make major discoveries with significant benefits to human health, which we report in leading medical research journals.

Rapid change isn't only taking place in our accommodation – medical research itself is advancing at an unprecedented pace. New knowledge and new technologies are allowing the rate of discovery to accelerate every year, and we can only imagine where we will be in another 10 years time. It's very exciting for Kolling researchers to be part of this quest for new ways to prevent, diagnose or treat disease, and to see our discoveries being translated into practice, for the benefit of patients.

On a personal level, it's a very rewarding time to be part of this huge expansion of knowledge and understanding about the complex processes of health and disease. It has been 15 years since I took up the directorship of the Kolling Institute. Now and over the coming year, I look forward to highlighting for you some of our recent and ongoing research achievements.

### Rob Baxter

Director

Kolling Institute of Medical Research

## Kolling Story



The Kolling Institute of Medical Research, founded in 1920, is the oldest medical research institute in New South Wales.

It consists of 6 major research divisions: Cancer, Bone and Joint, Renal and Cardiovascular, Pain Management, Perinatal and Regenerative Medicine.

Kolling Foundation is located on the grounds of the Royal North Shore Hospital in St Leonards, Sydney and supports all medical research in the Royal North Shore Hospital Campus.

The Kolling Institute of Medical Research was named after a prominent businessman and engineer, Mr Charles Kolling.



## Revealed: Aggressive tumours can now be tamed

Dr Ann McCormack, from the Kolling Institute, was invited to present her work at the prestigious American Endocrine Society's Annual Meeting (ENDO) held in Washington DC in June, 2009. This meeting attracts nearly

8,000 attendees from more than 75 countries. Amongst the other presenters were two Nobel Laureates and world renowned researchers and clinicians. Her topic was "Chemotherapy of Aggressive Pituitary Tumours: Pathologic Predictors".

Aggressive pituitary tumours are tumours that continue to grow despite surgery, radiotherapy or medical therapy. They invade vital brain structures such as nerves and blood vessels and sometimes the brain itself. Management of these tumours is very challenging. Until recently, no chemotherapeutic agent had proved particularly successful. However, over the past four years a relatively new chemotherapeutic agent, temozolomide, has shown tremendous success in a few cases of aggressive, pituitary tumours. Dr McCormack's research focuses on a gene, O6-methylguanine-DNA methyltransferase (MGMT), a DNA repair enzyme, which is showing promise as a biomarker of response to temozolomide. Clinicians may be able to use information on the presence or absence of this gene in a patient's tumour sample to guide more effective use of temozolomide.



(Photo left, left to right) Michael Field – Northern Clinical School Assoc Dean, Sue Shilbury – General Manager North Shore Ryde Health Service, Rob Baxter – Director Kolling Institute, Jodi McKay – Minister for Science & Medical Research, Carol Pollock – Research Chair NSCCAHS and Kolling Foundation Board Members Sean Wilson – CEO, and Chris Westworth – Chairman.

## Minister for Science and Medical Research opens new centre

The Minister for Science and Medical Research, The Hon. Jodi McKay, officially opened the Centre for Developmental and Regenerative Medicine in the Kolling Institute of Medical Research on 4th July, 2009.

“This new facility will bring together researchers from five research units, including

neurogenetics, haematology, cancer, endocrine and cardiovascular disease,” Ms McKay said.

Having these experts under one roof will help to create a research powerhouse in the treatment of degenerative illnesses such as diabetes, neurology, blood diseases and heart repair.

(Below) Chris O’Neill, Director – Developmental and Regenerative Medicine, with Jodi McKay.



Following the opening, national leaders in stem cell research took part in a symposium, “Regenerative Medicine: Opportunities and Challenges”.

## Banking on our Future



The Kolling Institute’s tumour banks began in 1992 and have banked samples from over 5,000 patients for the purpose

of cancer research.

A tumour bank is a repository of deep-frozen samples of tumour tissue, corresponding healthy tissue and blood samples from patients. These stored samples are used specifically for research to help unravel the causes of cancer which may lead to new diagnostic tests or improved treatments.

Nurse Lynette Barrett (*pictured*), who works at the tumour bank with Ussha Pillai, says she feels honoured to play such an important part in the research process. She consults with the patients and their families discussing how they can help medical research. She finds most patients give consent for their tumour to be stored and available for future research. Often the patients say “it may not help me but I am sure one day they will find an answer.”

The Kolling Institute banks many tumour types including breast, brain and gynaecological tumours, as well as thyroid, adrenal, parathyroid, pancreatic and

gastrointestinal tumours from surgery conducted at Royal North Shore and nearby hospitals. The Kolling Institute is also a collection site for the NSW Breast Cancer Tissue Bank and the Sydney Melanoma Unit Tumour Bank, as well as being part of the NSW Pancreatic Cancer Network.

There are still so many unanswered questions regarding cancer and medical researchers worldwide are working on finding the answers. Community support will help us maintain the dedicated staff needed to run these banks, as well as purchase critical equipment for long-term storage of samples for research as our banks continue to grow.

## Researcher Profile



Meet Associate Professor Janet Keast, Director of Basic Research, in the Pain Management Laboratory at the Kolling Institute

of Medical Research. She is the niece of North Shore community icon, Eric Wilksch, loves her AFL (which she calls “real football”) and is an enthusiastic foodie.

### *This is her story*

“I am a neuroscientist working in two areas of research. One part of my team’s research aims to understand what causes the debilitating condition of persistent (chronic) pain. This type of pain is usually triggered by an injury, but continues for months or years after the tissues have healed. We hope that our research will lead to the development of better treatments for this type of pain, which are needed urgently.”

“The other part of our research relates to problems associated with

the urogenital organs – for example, problems with bladder control or sexual function that occur after some types of pelvic surgery. After prostate cancer surgery, a very common problem is loss of erectile function. After hysterectomy, there can also be long-lasting issues with bladder control. Both of these situations occur because it is impossible to avoid nerve damage during surgery – surgery that is often life-saving. We need to understand how to make these nerves grow and function normally again.”

“When I am not in the research laboratories at the Kolling Institute, I enjoy the outdoors and exploring the food and cultural diversity of Sydney.”

“I am from South Australia, so since relocating to the eastern states, have had to learn other languages – that is, the rules of Rugby Union and Rugby League! I will always prefer AFL, but after spending 11 years in Brisbane, before moving to Sydney, has made me a real Broncos fan

(and somewhat unpopular at State of Origin time!).”

### *Now here’s something about Janet that many people don’t know:*

“My only other relative who left South Australia and settled in Sydney was my uncle. It is an amazing coincidence that I am now living and working in the place where my uncle has contributed so much. My Uncle Eric Wilksch, who passed away in 2002, was an avid local historian and conservationist. He became an icon in the local community and there is a walk named after him in Flat Rock Gully. A lane in West Naremburn (*see photo below*) also honours his name, so I feel I have a strong link with this community.”

### **More info:**

[www.kolling.com.au/research](http://www.kolling.com.au/research)



## Celebrating 30 years of service



The Royal North Shore Hospital Time in Service Awards ceremony was held in August and Professor Ross Davey was recognised for 30 years’ service at the hospital. Adjunct Professor Davey heads the Bill Walsh Cancer Research Laboratories (check out [www.kolling.com.au/billwalsh](http://www.kolling.com.au/billwalsh)) where their research programs are aimed at improving cancer treatment.

*(Left to right)* Prof. Ross Davey and Chris Evans from Fundraising at RNSH.

## Hearing Research Grant awarded to Dr Nirmal Patel



(Above, left to right) Dr Nirmal Patel with Kolling Foundation Treasurer and Pfizer Business and Technology Director, Hamish McDonald.

Hearing impairment affects 1.9 million Australians. Three of every four Australians over the age of 70 have significant hearing impairment. Recent analysis suggests that with our ageing population, by 2050 25% of Australians will have significant hearing loss.

Dr Nirmal Patel is currently a Clinical Senior Lecturer at the University of Sydney. He also teaches on a weekly basis to medical students, residents and registrars. Dr Patel secured the prestigious Kolling

Institute Hearing Impairment Research Grant for \$150,000.

As Principal Investigator, Dr Patel will lead a project entitled: "Facilitating Atraumatic Insertion of Cochlear Implant Electrodes". Co-Investigators will include Dr Martin Forer, Professor Marcus Atlas and Dr David Brazier.

Hearing aids have been the traditional rehabilitative treatment option for sensorineural deafness, which makes up for 90% of hearing loss. In the last 25 years cochlear implantation has become a well-accepted form of treating severe to profound hearing loss of all varieties when hearing aids do not provide adequate amplification.

The criteria for recommending cochlear implantation are changing rapidly with the advent of better processor technology and implant designs, allowing patients with moderate to severe hearing loss to benefit from the device. His project, which is being undertaken at the new Kolling Research Building at the Royal North Shore Hospital Campus, will examine the ultrastructure of the cochlea during cochlear implant placement to determine factors that may minimise electrode trauma during insertion into the cochlea.

## A word from the Foundation



I hope you enjoy the new Kolling Newsletter. The new format aims to inform the local community about health and medical research. It will also raise awareness about the achievements which have led to better patient care at

Royal North Shore Hospital and North Shore Private Hospital.

We also look at some of the world class research programs currently operating at Kolling and meet

some of the leading researchers who are searching for better treatments, preventions and cures for diseases that threaten the quality of life of every Australian.

With your help, Kolling can continue to make a world of difference.

**Chris Westworth**  
Chairman  
Kolling Foundation

### MOMENT OF ACHIEVEMENT

**Dr Kerrie McDonald** who heads the Cerebral Tumour Research Group at the Kolling Institute, has been awarded the Hoshino Award for Young Investigators at the Third Quadrennial Meeting of the World Federation of Neuro-Oncology meeting in Japan.

## CEO Update



As we all know, the past year has been a challenging one. The impact of the global economic crisis has affected all charities, including the Kolling Foundation. During the same period there has been an increase in the number of people becoming ill and suffering from disease.

I was ten when medical research first touched my life. My mother was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of cancer. With four small children she was told she had six months to live. She is alive today because of a new method of diagnosis developed through innovative medical research.

Since joining the Kolling Foundation in December, 2008, I've had the honour of working with world class researchers and sharing similar journeys with other families who have benefitted from breakthrough medical research.

I am a strong believer that "medical research matters" and that with community support Kolling can continue to make a world of difference. If you can, please give generously, or contact me directly to discuss how to get involved.

### Sean Wilson

Chief Executive Officer  
Kolling Foundation  
[ceo@kolling.com.au](mailto:ceo@kolling.com.au)

## Bequests

We all aspire in different ways to leave a mark in this world. One easy way to leave your mark is to make a bequest. A bequest is a gift in your Will. However small or generous a bequest may be, you can be confident that it will assist the Kolling Foundation achieve its goals. It's a very special way for you to help future generations, by supporting medical research discover cures and improve treatments for diseases.

**More info:** [www.kolling.com.au/bequests](http://www.kolling.com.au/bequests)

## Looking for a speaker?

Consider a Kolling Researcher for your next meeting, school assembly or community event.

Kolling speakers can talk about the discoveries and advances in medical research made at the Kolling Institute.

To organise a Senior Member of staff to talk at your next event, contact the Kolling Foundation on 1300 565 546.



If you would like further information on providing a bequest in your Will to Kolling Foundation, please call 1300 565 546. Alternatively, perhaps you would prefer a Foundation Representative to visit you. We would like to acknowledge your generosity in some way, but will understand and respect any wish for anonymity.

## Healthy volunteers required

The Kolling Institute tumour banks facilitate research into the causes and treatment of cancer. Many studies require blood from healthy individuals to compare with cancer patients. We are building a "Healthy Volunteers Bank" at the Institute for this exact purpose.

- Are you over 18 years?
- Never been diagnosed with cancer?
- Willing to give a couple of teaspoons of blood and answer a short questionnaire?

### YOU CAN HELP!

There is no upper age limit as blood from older members of our community is very valuable for our research. Your blood sample and questionnaire will be coded to ensure total privacy. If you can help, please contact the Tumour Bank co-ordinator Lynette Barrett on 02 9926 4771

or [lynbarrett@med.usyd.edu.au](mailto:lynbarrett@med.usyd.edu.au)

# New Kolling Foundation Board Members



**Peter Allen** is the Chief Financial Officer of Westfield Group.

Prior to this position, Mr Allen was based in London as Westfield's CEO of UK/Europe and was responsible for establishing its presence in the United Kingdom.

Mr Allen has extensive experience in real estate and shopping malls in particular. Prior to joining Westfield in 1996, Mr Allen worked for Citibank for 11 years in Melbourne, New York and London.

**Meet the Board:** [www.kolling.com.au/board](http://www.kolling.com.au/board)

## Tours

The Kolling Institute conducts tours, allowing visitors to gain first-hand knowledge of the research being conducted and meet some of the scientists behind the research.

Tours are held on the third Thursday of each month and take approximately 1.5 hours.



**Zareh Nalbandian** is Co-Founder and CEO of Animal Logic, an Australian digital visual effects company based in Sydney and Santa Monica, California. Animal Logic produce award-winning design, animation and visual effects for the film, television and advertising industries.

Among Animal Logic's credits are "Babe", "The Matrix" and "Moulin Rouge". More recently, "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire", Baz Luhrmann's "Australia" and "Happy Feet".

Tours are free. Bookings are essential.

**Make a booking or for more info:**  
Tel 02 9926 4904  
[foundation@kolling.com.au](mailto:foundation@kolling.com.au)  
OR

**Virtual tour:**  
[www.kolling.com.au/building](http://www.kolling.com.au/building)

## DONATION FORM

**YES**, I want to help give researchers the funds they need to find cures.

Please accept my one-off donation of

\$25       \$50       \$100       \$200

My choice \$ \_\_\_\_\_

AND/OR

**Friends of Kolling Club:** I would like to become a Friend of Kolling and give a regular monthly gift of

\$25       \$50       \$100       \$200

Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (min. \$25 per month)

### PAYMENT METHOD

My cheque/money order/cash payable to Kolling Foundation is enclosed

OR

Please debit my credit card  
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- Please send me details on making a gift to Kolling Foundation in my Will
- I have already made a gift to Kolling Foundation in my Will
- Please tick if you do not wish to receive information about Kolling

**Post to:** Kolling Foundation

Level 12 Kolling Building, Royal North Shore Hospital Reserve Rd, St Leonards NSW 2065

**OR Donate by Phone:** 1300 565 546 or 02 9926 4919

**OR Donate Online:** [www.kolling.com.au/donate](http://www.kolling.com.au/donate)

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