Welcome to the second edition of “PAIN PALS”, a newsletter which provides friends and supporters of PMRI with news about recent research breakthroughs, and events in support of the great work performed at the Pain Management Research Institute.

PAIN TO BE A PRIORITY

At the Pain Management Research Institute’s “Swim Against Pain” Luncheon, the new NSW Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research, Jillian Skinner MP, identified pain management as a priority for her government.

Mrs Skinner co-hosted the luncheon with the director of the Institute, Professor Michael Cousins AM.

Minister Skinner told the gathering that it was vital NSW takes the lead on delivering better pain management services.

The ABC sports commentator, Peter Wilkins, was master of ceremonies for the luncheon, which attracted more than 170 health care industry representatives and PMRI supporters.

In a media statement released in early March, Mrs Skinner said “Severe and chronic pain is a little known health issue in NSW, but its impacts on sufferers and on society as a whole are enormous.”

“We must ensure we are better equipped as a state to meet demand for chronic pain services and drive down waiting times for treatment.”

Guest speakers included marathon swimmer James Pittar (who just happens to be blind) and another well-known ABC commentator Jim Maxwell, who shared stories about famous sporting identities enduring unbelievable pain while achieving extraordinary feats in their fields of endeavour.

One of the undoubted highlights of the Luncheon program was an interview between Professor Cousins and one of his long-term patients Emma Livingston, who rises above the constant pain in all parts of her body caused by her affliction called “Bilateral Multi-directional Glenohumeral Instability”.

Emma, a part-time tutor in literacy and numeracy, undergoes a six-hours-a-day program of physio- and hydro-therapy, along with mind control and electronic stimulation treatments to live a life...
surrounded by warm and loving family and friends. In 2009, Emma swam her own marathon at Balmoral Beach raising awareness of pain management and over $12,000 in funds for further research.

Mrs Skinner explained that PMRI’s research efforts are directed to discovering new and effective forms of treatment to allow people like Emma to return to loved ones and to work lives. “The ultimate aim of these programs is to return patients to as normal a life as can be lived with their condition.”

The Luncheon delivered $16,000 profit to PMRI for further research effort, plus another $16,000 in donations from supporters who were unable to join us on the day.

**PEOPLE IN PAIN RESEARCH**

The Spinal Cord Injury (“SCI”) Pain group within PMRI has recently appointed a new research assistant, Glen Hilton, with funds received from the NHMRC and a private family foundation. Glen comes from Newcastle and has experience with a technique that we have been using to record electrical activity in the brain so he has been a great addition to the team. Already he has been a huge help in our ongoing studies of brain changes in people with pain following spinal cord injury.

In addition, a visiting clinical research fellow from Thailand, Pramote Euasobhon, Dr Paul Wrigley, PMRI clinical psychologist Associate Professor Michael Nicholas and Glen have commenced a study investigating the role of “catastrophising” on how people experience pain. Catastrophising is a process where people tend to over react negatively to situations. This can increase the experience of pain so that just the act of thinking negative thoughts can make pain more severe.

The group is examining this phenomenon using very sophisticated tools that can measure how the brain responds to pain when people think negative thoughts. Learning how to change people’s thinking patterns could be a very successful way of reducing their pain and enabling them to manage their pain better.

Another member of our team, Dr Sylvia Gustin, has been performing and analysing brain scans of people with pain following spinal cord injury. Sylvia has been working with Professor Lindy Rae at Neuroscience Research Australia and Dr Luke Henderson at the University of Sydney and perfecting a brain imaging technique to measure the levels of a chemical in the brain that blocks out pain.

Sylvia is now one of the few people in the world who has been able to do this. This technique opens a door for us to see whether people with pain have lower amounts of this chemical in the brain. This presents the exciting opportunity of using brain scans to identify people who would respond to treatments that increase the levels of the chemical and reduce their pain.

We are extremely excited about developments in this field and keenly await new news that leads to improvement in the lives of so many sufferers of SCI and other forms of acute pain.

**MEMBERSHIP OF “FRIENDS OF PMRI”**

Membership is open to all people who care about finding new and improved ways of helping over 3 million Australians who suffer from chronic or persistent pain. In 2011 we need to find $1m from private sources to help grow the Institute with a critical mass of highly qualified researchers and clinicians. That is $1m beyond what we hope to receive in grants from Federal and State Government organisations.

These funds will allow projects to continue, like the Spinal Cord Injury Clinical Research, the Disease Specific Pharmacology of Chronic Pain and the New Mechanisms and Treatments of Pain in Children projects.

To become, or continue as a Member of “Friends of PMRI”, simply make of a donation each year of $50. The option exists for Members to donate more if they are so moved and are able. All donations are tax deductible.

We will keep you informed about functions and events the Institute is holding from time to time, as well as news about milestone research efforts.
PAIN ON THE RADAR AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

In May 2011 Professor Cousins spent a week as Visiting Professor at Stanford University California USA at the invitation of Associate Professor Sean Mackey. Professor Cousins had previously been on the faculty of Stanford from 1970 to 1974, and in 1984 was offered a chair in the faculty of Medicine at Stanford.

During the visit, Professor Cousins delivered a number of keynote lectures and spent a considerable amount of time with Professor Mackey, the Director of the Multidisciplinary Pain Management Centre, discussing potential collaborations in research and education. Professor Mackey's group has been prominent in brain imaging and pain. (His work was described in the special issue of Time magazine of March 7 2011 which featured the cover story ‘Understanding Pain’).

The PMRI team including Associate Professor Philip Siddall and Dr Paul Wrigley has also carried out ground-breaking work on brain imaging, particularly with respect to neuropathic pain associated with spinal cord injury (see accompanying article).

A major focus of the discussions was the possibility of Stanford University becoming a collaborator and North American partner in our University of Sydney Pain Management Diploma and Masters Education program. This would be a major step forward since Stanford has some exceptional resources in distance education and delivery methodology, and is very keen to become strongly involved in this international pain education program.

Professor Cousins also discussed with Professor Mackey Stanford’s plans to develop a national program for documenting the outcomes of pain treatments. PMRI has indicated our interest in being involved in this program, which would allow us to compare our outcomes with leading centres in the USA.

This productive visit to Stanford heralds in a new level of interaction between PMRI and the Stanford group which has evolved into a leading pain management focus in the USA.

Whilst at Stanford, Professor Cousins discussed with Professor Mackey the Institute of Medicine report to the US Congress on pain management. Professor Mackey was part of the committee, which produced this report, recommending transformational change in the way pain is managed. A key aspect of the report is the recognition that chronic pain becomes a disease in its own right. Importantly, a focus of the research work in Stanford and PMRI investigates the causes of the central nervous system disease processes that underlie chronic pain.

This ‘transformational change’ in the US report contains some important parallels to the National Pain Strategy in Australia and the messages we are trying to get our governments here to understand.

Stanford’s strategy includes the development of a national pain database designed to track outcomes of pain treatments. It will record patient history, condition prior to treatment, treatment outcomes as well as economic information designed to analyse cost-effectiveness of various treatments. PMRI plans to participate in this project.
It is intended that the database software which is part of a research program being funded with a grant of $11 million from the National Institute of Health, will be offered free of charge to other organisations.

“This is a very attractive proposition for Australia, in keeping with the recommendations of the National Pain Strategy,” said Professor Cousins.

“It is something Associate Professor Michael Nicholas has started to do at the Pain Management Research Institute, but has not had the funding needed to develop to its full potential.”

“The collaboration with Stanford could be a very significant relationship which may help fast-track some of our research initiatives, where we can draw upon the strength of the two universities to enhance our research and education programs,” Professor Cousins said.

**NSW MOVES AHEAD WITH STATE-WIDE PAIN STRATEGY**

Following its undertaking at the recent state election, the NSW Government is now moving ahead to develop a state-wide pain strategy which will be aligned with the recommendations of the National Pain Strategy.

A Ministerial Taskforce has been formed to oversee the process and report to the Minister for Health Jillian Skinner with recommendations for a state-wide plan by 30 September 2011. PMRI Director, Professor Michael Cousins is a member of the taskforce.

The recommendations will be drawn from work undertaken by the NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI) Pain Network, which was formed in February 2010 and comprises over 80 clinicians as well as consumers who have experience with chronic pain.

The network is led by an Executive Committee which receives input from three working groups: The Tertiary Working Group, Primary Care Working group and the Community Partnerships Working group.

The focus of the work has been to develop an agreed Model of Care for delivery of pain services throughout the state. A survey of Tertiary Hospital services has been undertaken and is an important component of the activity, as this information has not been previously available.

**NEW PAIN SERVICES FOR QUEENSLAND**

Queensland is also forging ahead with the development of new pain services, in line with the recommendations of the National Pain Strategy.
Three new regional multi-disciplinary pain clinics have now been established at the Gold Coast, Townsville and Nambour hospitals. The Government is also developing a plan to expand services in primary care and community settings.

Implementation of the state plans will represent a very significant step in progressing the goals of the National Strategy to improve the quality of life of people with pain and their families and to minimise the burden of pain on individuals and the community.

(http://www.painaustralia.org.au/strategy/)

MUSIC TO EASE THE PAIN

Over 250 people enjoyed the first two “Windows on Pain” Concerts in 2011 raising further funds for pain research, with help from Reckitt Benckiser, Medtronic, St Jude Medical and Noyce Brothers Wines. Each concert is followed by a fine food and wine Soiree, where patrons are able to mingle with the musicians.

Metropolitan Chamber Orchestra and conductor Sarah-Grace Williams planned 3 fantastic events for PMRI through 2011 at different school venues around Sydney: Abbotleigh in May, Wenona/Shore in July and the final one in the series to be held at Kambala Rose Bay on Sunday 30th October.

At each concert, we’ve had the pleasure of a well-known personality helping out as compere: the May concert was compered by the ‘pops pianist’ Bernard Walz, and the July concert by ‘ABC Weekends’ broadcaster Simon Marnie. Simon had a lot of fun on stage at the expense of long-suffering percussionist Murray Walker.

How gorgeous was the Weber Clarinet Concert with soloist Andrew Doyle!
“Postgraduate Studies in Pain Management” is an online postgraduate coursework degree program, with the option to enter or exit at the Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma or Masters level. Aims of the program:

- To improve patient outcomes by providing postgraduate, clinically relevant education to an international standard
- To educate students in the sciences, concepts, approaches and procedures relevant to pain management, in the context of a multidisciplinary team.

Each of these concerts, apart from providing a thoroughly delightful program of light classical music, reaches out to a new community who is hearing about the mission of PMRI for the first time.

For the Sunday 30th October Concert, we are extremely excited that Emma Ayres from the ABC Classic FM breakfast program with her soft refined voice will be our next compere. The music program includes excerpts from Vivaldi’s Four Seasons, plus the Mozart Flute Concerto.
The program provides advanced education in pain management for graduates in medicine, dentistry, psychology, nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and other relevant disciplines.

In 2011 we have had record enrolments in this program. Students (local and international) are from a wide range of health disciplines.

2. “Annual Pain Management Symposium 2011” was held on 22/23 July. The focus of the 2011 symposium was as follows:

   **Day 1: The Problem of Pain**
   Participants were introduced to the extent of the problem of pain and explored pain contributors and current principles of pain management.

   **Day 2: Orofacial Pain**
   On the second day participants combined day 1 topics of psychology, pharmacology and neurobiology in the orofacial region, an area where dental, medical and allied practitioners utilise team management approaches in a misunderstood branch of pain management.

   This symposium was attended by over 60 health professionals from a range of discipline areas including pain specialists, nurses, psychologists, dentists and general practitioners from Sydney, country NSW and interstate. The feedback from the participants was overwhelmingly positive. A number commented on the exceptional calibre of the presenters while others described the update on current research and development in the field of pain management very beneficial to their professional practice. The majority of participants indicated that they would recommend this type of symposium to their colleagues.

3. **Find us on Facebook**
   The Pain Education Unit now has a presence on Facebook. Please join us by searching on Facebook for Pain Education, The University of Sydney. Notices of upcoming PMRI educational events will be posted here.

4. **Pain Management Multidisciplinary Workshop 2012, 6 – 16 February.**
   The first week focuses on the extent of the problem of pain and explores pain contributors and assessment. In the second week the focus is to explore current principles of pain management.

   This Workshop is held in the Kolling Building, Royal North Shore Hospital.

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**FORTHCOMING FUNCTIONS 2011/12**

“**Windows on Pain” Concerts** featuring the Metropolitan Chamber Orchestra with Sarah-Grace Williams and Emma Ayres

..... Kambala Rose Bay, Sunday 30th October from 3:00pm

Watch out for news of a **GALA CONCERT** with Metropolitan Chamber Orchestra in 2012 featuring one of Australia’s finest singing talents. Dates, program and venues will be advised soon.

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**NEW FUND-RAISING OPPORTUNITY**

In May this year, PMRI was selected by the **ASX Thomson Reuters Foundation**, representing many of Australia’s top corporate organisations, as one of their partner charities for their 2011/12 charity fund-raising drive.

PMRI will share with another 22 registered charities like Leukemia Foundation and Wheelchair Sports in...
a projected pot of $1.5m, provided our supporters (i.e. YOU) participate actively in the Foundation’s Art Union, Yachting Regatta (28th October), Golf Day and Dinner (both 24th February). As Friends of PMRI, your assistance and participation will be sought for these exciting events.

**Art Union prizes are:**

1. Volkswagen coupe/cabriolet 1.55RSI 6 speed DSG (valued at over $56,700);
2. 3-night Luxury Hayman Holiday (over $2,000); and
3. LG 50PZ570 50” Full HD Plasma TV (over $1,500).

The tickets are available for sale NOW at $20 each or $100 for six. Call the office on (02) 9929-5566. Art Union Permit Number GOCAU/1301.

This new venture provides PMRI some vital exposure to many of the Top 200 corporate entities in Australia.


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**MANAGE YOUR PAIN: 3rd EDITION**

If you have chronic pain and you are wondering if this book could be helpful to you, try answering the following questions. Over the last month or so how often have you:

- Used pain killers to do something you know will stir up your pain?
- Done an activity until it is finished (regardless of pain) then rested?
- Found that pain is interfering with your sleep, work, sport and social activities?
- Had one or more long rest periods during the day due to pain?
- Had upsetting thoughts when your pain gets worse (like “I can’t go on”, “it’s killing me”)?
- Been concerned that your doctors have missed something?
- Been told to “live with the pain” but not shown how to do it?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, then **MANAGE YOUR PAIN**, available from ABC Shops, will help to improve your life.

In **MANAGE YOUR PAIN** the authors have drawn on the latest scientific research and their extensive clinical experience to show you how to live with pain. **MANAGE YOUR PAIN** will help you and your family to gain a better understanding of your pain and minimise the impact it has on your life. **MANAGE YOUR PAIN** is a self-help book, but it can be used as part of a program worked out with your doctor, clinical psychologist and/or therapist.

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**CORPORATE DONORS 2010/11**

During 2010/11 financial year, apart from the companies assisting our social and cultural activities recognised earlier in this newsletter, the PMRI research effort has been enriched by significant grants from the following corporate partners:

- **IAG**
- **Janssen-Cilag**
- **Mundipharma**

Professor Cousins commented on the continuing support of these companies, along with a modest number of private family and company trusts: “Without the strategic contribution of these companies, PMRI would not be able to maintain and grow its global reputation as a leader in its field.”

“Add to these, the personal donations from over 220 Friends of PMRI, to whom we are most grateful. Their contributions enable us to branch out into new areas of basic and clinical research,” said Professor Cousins.

Should you be moved to further assist the work of PMRI, donations can be made to PMRI at the address below. Donations over $2 are tax-deductible. For more information, visit the website: [www.sydney.edu.au/medicine/pmri](http://www.sydney.edu.au/medicine/pmri).

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