



# Life as a Clinician-Scientist

WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
Symposium



Australian  
Academy of  
Health & Medical  
Sciences

Harry Perkins Institute

Saturday 22 March 2025

# Thank you to our sponsors

This event is part of the *Life as a Clinician-Scientist* program run by the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences. This program is unique in Australia – inspiring, encouraging and supporting individuals across the country to pursue research careers in the health and medical sciences.

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The Academy also receives funding from the Australian Government, which supports the delivery of this program. The views expressed at this event do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government.

# Welcome to Life as a Clinician-Scientist

I am delighted to welcome you to our Life as a Clinician-Scientist WA symposium.

Let us take you on a journey of possibilities, where clinical practice meets groundbreaking research.

## Exploring pathways to a fulfilling career

Clinician-scientists are critical in advancing health care in our country, using their insights from working with patients to answer fundamental scientific questions and ultimately improve patient care. Today, you'll hear firsthand experiences showcasing the many pathways to this exciting career.

Our esteemed speakers come from diverse specialties and backgrounds, yet they share a common commitment to bridging the gap between clinical practice and health research. Their journeys highlight the challenges, rewards, and profound impact of this career path – both on a personal level and broader scale. We are honoured that these outstanding role models have generously agreed to join us and share their wisdom.

I encourage you to approach today with curiosity and an open mind. Engage with our speakers, ask questions, and reflect on how their experiences might shape your own aspirations. This is a rare opportunity to connect with those who have walked this path before you—so take full advantage and allow their stories to guide you on your own journey to becoming a clinician-scientist.

I would also like to use this opportunity to thank our national event partners, whose generous support make these symposia possible.

We hope today inspires you – we can't wait to see what you do next.

Professor Steve Webb FAHMS

Chair of the Life as a Clinician-Scientist WA symposium



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# About the Academy


The Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences is the independent expert voice for health and medical sciences in Australia. We advance research and innovation in Australia to improve everyone's health.

We are the nation's Learned Academy for the health and medical sciences: an interdisciplinary body of Fellows, who are Australia's most influential researchers in health and medicine. Each Fellow is elected by their peers for their outstanding contributions to the health and medical sciences in their respective fields.

The broad experience of our Fellows ensures that our advice is independent, expert and evidence-based. We use our knowledge and networks to drive change and provide leadership to ensure the most pressing health issues facing society can be addressed for the benefit of all.

We actively engage with the community to raise awareness and ensure that everyone can participate in, and benefit from, health and medical research. Through our work, we seek to reduce health inequities in Australia.

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8.30am	<b>REGISTRATION</b>
<b>SESSION 1</b>	<b>MY JOURNEY TO BECOMING A CLINICIAN-SCIENTIST</b>
9.00am	<p><i>Welcome to the symposium</i></p> <p><b>Professor Steve Webb FAHMS</b>          Professor of Critical Care Research at Monash University, Director of Research for St John of God Healthcare, and ICU consultant at St John of God Subiaco and the Mount Hospital</p>
9.10am	<p><i>Why science, why now?</i></p> <p><b>Professor Chris Blyth FAHMS</b>          Professor of Paediatric Infectious Diseases, The University of Western Australia and Head of the Wesfarmers Centre of Vaccines and Infectious Diseases, The Kids Research Institute Australia</p>
9.40am	<p><i>My life as a clinician scientist</i></p> <p><b>Professor Wendy Erber FAHMS</b>          Consultant Haematologist, PathWest and Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, The University of Western Australia</p>
10.15am	<b>MORNING TEA</b>
<b>SESSION 2</b>	<b>PANEL DISCUSSION</b> <i>Chaired by Professor Steve Webb FAHMS</i>
10.45am	<p><i>Practical advice for creating your life as a clinician-scientist</i></p> <p><b>Professor Chandra Balaratnasingam</b>          Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology, Lions Eye Institute and The University of Western Australia</p> <p><b>Dr Neha Jain</b>          Paediatric and Adolescent Oncology Consultant, Perth Children's Hospital, and PHD student, The University of Western Australia</p> <p><b>Associate Professor Andy Toner</b>          Consultant Anaesthetist, Royal Perth Hospital</p>
11.40am	<b>SPOT MENTORING SESSIONS</b> <i>Please register for a one-on-one session at the registration desk</i>
12.30pm	<b>SYMPOSIUM CLOSE</b>

# Speakers



## **Professor Steve Webb FAHMS**

***Professor of Critical Care Research at Monash University, Director of Research for St John of God Healthcare, and ICU consultant at St John of God Subiaco and the Mount Hospital***

**Professor Steve Webb** is an Intensive Care specialist and a Professor of Critical Care Research. He is a past-Chair of the Australian Clinical Trials Alliance, the ANZICS Clinical Trials Group, a member of the Australian Health Ethics Committee, and a member of the AAHMS Mentorship Committee.

He has been an investigator on trials with an accumulated sample size of more than 60,000 patients, is a named investigator on more than \$185 M of competitive research funding, and has published more than 250 manuscripts that have been cited more than 75,000 times. Results from his trials have been incorporated rapidly into international guidelines and implemented into clinical practice saving many lives.



### **Professor Chris Blyth FAHMS**

***Head, Wesfarmers Centre of Vaccines and Infectious Diseases, The Kids Research Institute Australia, and Professor of Paediatric Infectious Diseases, The University of Western Australia***

**Professor Chris Blyth** is Professor of Paediatric Infectious Diseases (School of Medicine, The University of Western Australia) and head of the Wesfarmers Centre of Vaccines and Infectious Diseases (The Kids Research Institute Australia). He is an infectious diseases physician at Perth Children's Hospital, establishing the Department of Infectious Diseases and a clinical microbiologist with PathWest Laboratory Medicine.

Professor Blyth's research and advocacy has driven changes to immunisation programs in Australia and internationally. As a member of the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI 2012-2021; co-chair from 2018-2021), he led Australia's technical experts informing the national COVID-19 vaccination program. Through leadership and mentoring, he has significantly developed infectious disease and public health research capacity in Australia and the region. Professor Blyth's capacity to communicate and promote health and science to the broader community have been both recognised and awarded.



### **Professor Wendy Erber FAHMS**

***Consultant Haematologist, PathWest and Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, The University of Western Australia***

**Professor Wendy Erber** is a Clinical Academic Haematologist, with major interests in diagnostic haematology and translational research. Two years after medical school, she went to the University of Oxford for doctoral research, and, on returning to Australia completed her vocational training in haematology. She has held positions as Consultant Haematologist in Perth and at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge before taking an academic appointment at The University of Western Australia. Her research interests span immunocytochemistry, genomics of haematological disease and invention of imaging flow cytometry that incorporates chromosomal analysis. She is an active teacher of medical students and vocational haematology trainees.



### **Professor Chandra Balaratnasingam**

***Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology, Lions Eye Institute and The University of Western Australia***

**Professor Chandra Balaratnasingam** is a Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at The University of Western Australia and vitreoretinal surgeon at the Lions Eye Institute. He undertook ophthalmology training in Australia before completing fellowships in medical and surgical diseases of the retina at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and the Vitreous Retina Macula Consultants of New York. Chandra's research is focused on defining the pathogenic mechanisms that underlie neural-glia-vascular injury in diabetic retinopathy. He performs a range of laboratory-based and clinical studies in this field. Chandra is also the QEC chair for the WA training network for the RANZCO.



### **Dr Neha Jain**

***Paediatric and Adolescent Oncology Consultant, Perth Children's Hospital, and PHD student, The University of Western Australia***

**Dr Neha Jain** is a paediatric oncologist specialising in relapsed malignancies, immunotherapy, and early-phase clinical trials. Her career has been shaped by fellowships in Sydney, London, and Perth, where she developed both her clinical expertise and research focus, alongside earning a Diploma in Child Health and Master of Public Health (Epidemiology). In 2022, she became a paediatric oncology consultant at Perth Children's Hospital and was awarded the CAHS-TKI-UWA Clinician Research Scholarship. Currently, she is in her second year of PhD at The Kids Research Institute Australia, focusing on RNA-based therapies that harness the immune system to treat paediatric cancers. Her goal is to advance innovative therapies that improve outcomes for children with cancer.





**Associate Professor  
Andy Toner**

***Consultant Anaesthetist, Royal Perth  
Hospital***

**Associate Professor Andy Toner** completed undergraduate studies at Cambridge University, his medical qualification at Oxford University, and his anaesthetic training in London. Subsequently he obtained his Doctor of Medicine research degree (PhD equivalent) from Cambridge University. He is a Consultant Anaesthetist at Royal Perth Hospital, Associate Professor at The University of Western Australia, an NHMRC Investigator Grant recipient (2023-2027) and an Executive member of the Australia and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists Clinical Trial Network. His main research interests include the conduct of phase 2 and phase 3 Randomised Controlled Trials to improve outcomes after high-risk surgery.





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