



Life as a Clinician-Scientist

VICTORIA
Symposium



Australian
Academy of
Health & Medical
Sciences

Melbourne, VIC Saturday 9 August 2025

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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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Welcome to Life as a Clinician-Scientist

I am delighted to warmly welcome you to our 10th Victorian Life as a Clinician-Scientist symposium.

Let us take you on a journey of possibilities, where clinical practice is deeply integrated with groundbreaking research. This career can be life-changing for you – and your patients – with global impact.

Exploring pathways to a fulfilling career

Clinician-scientists are critical in advancing healthcare in the world, bringing their clinical insights from the patients they care for, to answer fundamental scientific questions and ultimately, to translate them back to improving patients' lives. Today, you will 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, scientific research and improving health care. Their stories are testament to the impact the career of a clinician-scientist can have, both on a personal level and on a broader scale. We are honoured to have these outstanding role models share their wisdom with us.

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 experienced individuals – take full advantage and let their stories guide your journey to becoming a clinician-scientist.

I would sincerely like to thank our national event partners, whose generous support, and commitment to inspiring the next generation of clinician-scientists, across all types of clinical practice, make these symposia possible.

I hope today encourages you to pursue your passion – I look forward to seeing where your career takes you – there is much to do amidst a lifetime of opportunities!

Laureate Professor Ingrid Scheffer AO FAA FRS FAHMS

Chair and founder of the Life as a Clinician-Scientist program





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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	REGISTRATION
9.00am	<p><i>Welcome to the symposium</i></p> <p>Laureate Professor Ingrid Scheffer AO FAA FRS FAHMS LACS program founder and Chair of Paediatric Neurology, The University of Melbourne</p>
SESSION 1	<p>REACH FOR THE STARS <i>Chaired by Laureate Professor Ingrid Scheffer</i></p>
9.10am	<p><i>Scientific curiosity holds the key to curative medicines</i></p> <p>Professor Mark Dawson FAA FAHMS Associate Director for Research Translation and Consultant Haematologist at the Royal Melbourne Hospital and Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, and Head, Cancer Epigenetics Laboratory</p>
9.50am	<p><i>Connect, inspire, discover and grow: the rich life of the clinician scientist</i></p> <p>Professor Sue Walker AO FAHMS Head of Department, Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Newborn Health, The University of Melbourne and Co-Director, Mercy Perinatal, Mercy Hospital for Women</p>
10.30am	MORNING TEA
SESSION 2	<p>CAN YOU HAVE IT ALL? <i>Chaired by Sophie Russ-Hall</i></p>
11.10am	<p><i>Life as a clinician researcher: what you always wanted to know but never got told</i></p> <p>Professor Danielle Mazza AM FAHMS Head of Department, Department of General Practice, School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University and Director, SPHERE NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence</p>
	<p>PANEL SESSION <i>Chaired by Laureate Professor Ingrid Scheffer</i></p>
11.55am	<p><i>Building my career</i></p> <p>Associate Professor Jai Darvall Acting Deputy Director, Intensive Care Unit and Anaesthetist, Department of Anaesthesia/Pain Management, Royal Melbourne Hospital, and Honorary Principal Fellow, Department of Critical Care, The University of Melbourne</p> <p>Dr Thanuja Dharmadasa Deputy Head, Neurodegeneration & Immunology Research, The Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health and Neurologist and Clinical Neurophysiologist, The Royal Melbourne Hospital</p> <p>Associate Professor Richard Grills Director, Department of Urological Surgery and Director of Robotic Surgery, University Hospital Geelong, Barwon Health, and Global Health Specialty Coordinator for Urology, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons</p> <p>Associate Professor Jun Yang Head, Endocrine Hypertension Group, Hudson Institute of Medical Research, Senior Researcher, Department of Medicine, Monash University and Consultant Endocrinologist, Monash Health</p>

12.50pm	LUNCH <i>Spot mentoring sessions from 1:10pm - 2:00pm</i>
SESSION 3	HOW DO YOU BECOME A CLINICIAN-SCIENTIST? <i>Chaired by Sophie Russ-Hall</i>
2.10pm	<i>The do's and don'ts of following a career path as a clinician researcher</i> Professor Sarath Ranganathan FAHMS Head, Melbourne Medical School, The University of Melbourne, and Consultant Respiratory Physician, Royal Children's Hospital
2.40pm	<i>Choosing projects that are worth getting out of bed for</i> Professor Erica Wood AO FAHMS Head, Transfusion Research Unit, School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University and Consultant Haematologist, Monash Health
3.10pm	<i>How did I get here and how you can go there</i> Professor Richard Page Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, Deakin University; Director of Orthopaedic Research, St John of God and Barwon Health; Senior Shoulder and Upper Limb Surgeon; and Director, Barwon Centre of Orthopaedic Research and Education
3.45pm	SYMPOSIUM CLOSE

Speakers



Laureate Professor Ingrid Scheffer AO FAA FRS FAHMS

LACS program founder and Chair of Paediatric Neurology, The University of Melbourne

Professor Ingrid Scheffer is a physician-scientist whose work as a paediatric neurologist and epileptologist at The University of Melbourne, Florey and Murdoch Institutes, Australia, has led epilepsy genetics research over more than 30 years. In collaboration with Professor Samuel Berkovic and molecular geneticists, they identified the first epilepsy gene and many genes subsequently.

Professor Scheffer led the first major International League Against Epilepsy revision of the classification of epilepsies in 28 years. She has published >700 papers and is passionate about improving outcomes for patients and families through innovative translational science. Professor Scheffer was a co-recipient of the Australian Prime Minister's Prize for Science, L'Oréal-UNESCO Woman in Science Laureate in Paris, and, in 2018, was elected to the Royal Society (London).



Sophie Russ-Hall

Medical student, Deakin University

Sophie Russ-Hall is a third-year medical student at Deakin University with a background in clinical research. After completing a Bachelor of Science at The University of Melbourne in 2017, she undertook an Honours year, during which she was surprised to discover an interest in clinical research. This led to her role as a Research Assistant at the Epilepsy Research Centre, where she worked closely with Professor Ingrid Scheffer. Through this experience and her exposure to clinician-scientists in action, Sophie developed a strong appreciation for how research can inform and enhance patient care. In the future, Sophie hopes to build a career that combines clinical practice with meaningful research to improve the lives of patients.



Professor Mark Dawson **FAA FAHMS**

***Associate Director for Research
Translation and Consultant
Haematologist at the Royal Melbourne
Hospital and Peter MacCallum Cancer
Centre, and Head Cancer Epigenetics
Laboratory***

Professor Mark Dawson is a Physician-Scientist and an Associate Director of Research at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. He is an internationally recognised leader in the field of cancer biology and his research has helped lead to the development of several first-in-class epigenetic therapies that have been translated into various clinical trials across the world. In recognition of his research achievements, he has been awarded several awards and prizes including the Prime Ministers Prize for Science as Life Scientist of the Year 2020. He has also been elected to the Australian Academy of Science and Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences and the European Molecular Biology Organisation (EMBO).



Professor Sue Walker **AO FAHMS**

***Head of Department, Obstetrics,
Gynaecology and Newborn Health, The
University of Melbourne and Co-Director,
Mercy Perinatal, Mercy Hospital for
Women***

Professor Sue Walker is the Sheila Handbury Chair of Maternal Fetal Medicine and Head of Department of Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Newborn Health at The University of Melbourne. She is also Co-Director of Mercy Perinatal – a three-pillar centre of excellence committed to clinical care, education and research in high-risk pregnancy.

Professor Walker's own research interests focus on improving the detection and management of fetal growth disorders, treatments for pre-eclampsia, and prevention of stillbirth.



Professor Danielle Mazza **AM FAHMS**

Head of Department, Department of General Practice, School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University and Director, SPHERE NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence

Professor Danielle Mazza is the Head of the Department of General Practice at Monash University and a nationally and internationally recognised leader in implementation research and knowledge translation in the general practice setting.

She has made significant, sustained and ongoing contributions to advance general practice and primary health care in Australia in the field of women's sexual and reproductive health and as a proponent of evidence-based quality improvement through guideline development and implementation. She leads the SPHERE CRE, which aims to improve the quality, safety, and capacity of primary health care services to achieve better outcomes in women's sexual and reproductive health.



Associate Professor Jai Darvall

Acting Deputy Director, Intensive Care Unit and Anaesthetist, Department of Anaesthesia/Pain Management, Royal Melbourne Hospital, and Honorary Principal Fellow, Department of Critical Care, The University of Melbourne

Associate Professor Jai Darvall is an anaesthetist and intensivist at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, co-lead of the perioperative medicine service within the Department of Anaesthesia and Pain Management, and holds dual appointments at The University of Melbourne in the Departments of Critical Care and Medical Education.

Associate Professor Darvall has clinical and research interests in frailty, perioperative medicine, and persistent critical illness. His research program aims to improve outcomes for older patients with critical illness or undergoing surgery, particularly those living with frailty. In addition to his primary research interests, he is a trialist and chief investigator of two ANZCA Clinical Trials Network endorsed studies.



Dr Thanuja Dharmadasa

Deputy Head, Neurodegeneration & Immunology Research, The Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health, and Neurologist and Clinical Neurophysiologist, The Royal Melbourne Hospital

Dr Thanuja Dharmadasa is a Neurologist and Clinical Neurophysiologist at The Royal Melbourne Hospital, and Deputy Head of Neurodegeneration and Immunology Research at The Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health. Dr Dharmadasa completed her Neurology specialist medical training at The Alfred and Royal Melbourne Hospitals, before undertaking a PhD in MND at The University of Sydney. She subsequently received a prestigious NHMRC CJ Martin Early Career Fellowship to continue this work at The University of Oxford (UK). As a clinician-scientist, her clinical research explores novel advanced neurophysiological and neuroimaging techniques in patients to understand disease mechanisms in motor neuron disease (MND), and advancing these techniques into the clinic and for use in clinical trials research. Having worked as an MND clinician at several large MND centres nationally and internationally, she also has a keen interest on strategies surrounding the implementation and optimisation of best care for patients living with the disease.



Associate Professor Richard Grills

Director, Department of Urological Surgery and Director of Robotic Surgery, University Hospital Geelong, Barwon Health, and Global Health Specialty Coordinator for Urology, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

Associate Professor Richard Grills is a Urological Surgeon who has worked in both public and private practice in Geelong since 2003. He is the Director of the Department of Urological Surgery and the Director of Robotic Surgery at University Hospital Geelong.

He has worked previously in Zambia, Tanzania and Zanzibar and conducts yearly Urology aid trips to a number of Pacific Island countries. He has expertise in minimally invasive surgical techniques and in 2017 established regional Australia's first public robotic surgical program in Geelong.

His research interests relate to surgical education and training, surgical innovation, rural surgery, prostate and bladder cancer. His Geelong based research group has a focus on fostering interest and supporting junior doctors with their research projects.



Associate Professor Jun Yang

Head, Endocrine Hypertension Group, Hudson Institute of Medical Research, Senior Researcher, Department of Medicine, Monash University and Consultant Endocrinologist, Monash Health

Associate Professor Jun Yang is the Head of the Endocrine Hypertension Group at Hudson Institute of Medical Research, a Consultant Endocrinologist at Monash Health, and a Senior Researcher in the Department of Medicine at Monash University.

Associate Professor Yang graduated from Monash University with a MBBS (Hon) in 2001, attained her FRACP in 2010, and completed a PhD in 2013 focusing on tissue-selective coregulators of the mineralocorticoid receptor (MR). She has since advanced basic and clinical research in the field of MR-driven cardiovascular disease, particularly primary aldosteronism, contributing to 133 original publications. She established Victoria's first Endocrine Hypertension Service, co-leads the Primary Aldosteronism Centre of Excellence, and enjoys fostering national and international collaborations to enhance the detection and management of primary aldosteronism for better patient outcomes.



Professor Sarath Ranganathan FAHMS

Head, Melbourne Medical School, The University of Melbourne, and Consultant Respiratory Physician, Royal Children's Hospital

Professor Sarath Ranganathan is an internationally renowned clinician scientist specialising in paediatric respiratory medicine. He is Head of the Melbourne Medical School and a consultant respiratory physician at the Royal Children's Hospital, where he served as Director of Respiratory and Sleep Medicine from 2012 to 2020. He was also a Group Leader at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute until this year.

He holds several international leadership roles in paediatric respiratory medicine. He serves as non-executive Director of Lung Foundation Australia and Chair for the Australian Cystic Fibrosis Centre for Research Excellence Steering Council. Sarath has published over 350 papers, secured more than \$60 million in research funding, and helped shape national and international guidelines in areas including cystic fibrosis and childhood lung disease.



Professor Erica Wood **AO FAHMS**

**Head, Transfusion Research Unit,
School of Public Health and Preventive
Medicine, Monash University and
Consultant Haematologist, Monash
Health**

Professor Erica Wood leads Monash University's Transfusion Research Unit and is a haematologist at Monash Health.

Professor Wood is an NHMRC Leadership Fellow, leading the Blood Synergy program and CRE in improving immunoglobulin use. She co-chairs WHO's Advisory Group on Blood Regulation, Availability & Safety; serves on several Australian government committees, and is an Associate Editor for *Blood*.

Professor Wood is past president of the International Society of Blood Transfusion, International Haemovigilance Network, and Australian & New Zealand Society of Blood Transfusion, and former RCPA Chief Examiner (Haematology).

In 2023, she was awarded an AO in the King's Birthday Honours List.



Professor Richard Page

**Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery,
Deakin University; Director of
Orthopaedic Research, St John of God
and Barwon Health; Senior Shoulder
and Upper Limb Surgeon; and Director,
Barwon Centre of Orthopaedic Research
and Education**

Professor Richard Page is Academic Chair of Orthopaedics at Deakin University, Barwon Health and St John of God Hospital. He is a specialist shoulder, upper limb and trauma surgeon and current President of the Shoulder and Elbow Society of Australia (SESA). Professor Page is also the Founder of the Barwon Centre for Orthopaedic Research and Education (B-CORE).

He has authored and presented on over 300 referred journal articles and book chapters with >\$20M in NHMRC and competitive grants. He has appeared in the media discussing shoulder and orthopaedic topics, with a focus on osteoarthritis. Professor Page's research covers shoulder replacement surgery, biomaterials and biomechanics, orthopaedic trauma, with extensive clinical trial experience in surgery.



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Pictured: Mihiri Silva, Doctor of Clinical Dentistry Alum, Consultant Paediatric Dentist at The Royal Children's Hospital and Lecturer at The Melbourne Dental School.

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