



Life as a Clinician-Scientist

SOUTH AUSTRALIA
Symposium



Australian
Academy of
Health & Medical
Sciences

Adelaide, SA **Tuesday 24 March 2026**

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.

We are grateful to our program partners across Australia:

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Welcome to Life as a Clinician-Scientist

We are delighted to warmly welcome you to our SA 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.

Explore 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.

We encourage you to approach this evening 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.

We are deeply grateful to our national partners, whose support helps us nurture the next generation of clinician researchers.

We hope tonight encourages you to pursue your passion. Your clinical skills and compassion are already changing lives – research is another way to extend that impact.

Thank you for joining us.

The Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences





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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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5.00pm	REGISTRATION
5.30pm	<i>Welcome to the symposium</i> Professor Helen Marshall AM FAHMS Professor of Vaccinology, The University of Adelaide and Clinical Research Director, the Women's and Children's Health Network, South Australia
SESSION 1	KEYNOTE TALK <i>Chaired by Professor Helen Marshall AM FAHMS</i>
5.40pm	<i>Where Your Questions Can Take You</i> Professor Jodie Dodd FAHMS Maternal Fetal Medicine Specialist, Clinical Director Women's and Babies Division, the Women's and Children's Hospital and Head of Department, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Adelaide University
SESSION 2	PANEL DISCUSSION <i>Chaired by Professor Helen Marshall AM FAHMS</i>
6.10pm	<i>Bridging Care and Discovery: The Clinician-Scientist Experience</i> Associate Professor Alexia Peña Paediatric Endocrinologist, Women's and Children's Hospital and Associate Professor, Adelaide University Associate Professor Tarik Sammour Colorectal Surgeon, Royal Adelaide Hospital and Associate Professor, Adelaide University Associate Professor Johan Verjans Consultant Cardiologist, Royal Adelaide Hospital / Jones Radiology; Future Industry Fellow, Australian Institute for Machine Learning, University of Adelaide; Platform Leader AI, South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute
7.00pm	LIGHT SUPPER
7.30pm	SPOT MENTORING SESSIONS <i>Please register for a one-on-one session with a speaker at the registration desk</i>
8.30pm	SYMPOSIUM CLOSE

Speakers



Professor Helen Marshall AM FAHMS

Professor of Vaccinology, The University of Adelaide and Clinical Research Director, the Women's and Children's Health Network, South Australia

Professor Helen Marshall is a clinician scientist and NHMRC Investigator L2 Fellow. She is a Consultant and Professor in Vaccinology in the College of Health and Clinical Research Director of the Women's and Children's Health Network. Professor Marshall is Medical Director of the Vaccinology and Immunology Research Trials Unit, at the Women's and Children's Hospital, and is the Research Leader, Vaccines and Infectious Diseases Group. She is ranked #1 nationally and #6 internationally for her research into meningococcal disease and prevention through vaccination. She leads the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Neisseria Disease Control and was awarded the NHMRC Elizabeth Blackburn award for the highest ranked Investigator grant in Public Health in 2024 and Eureka Infectious diseases prize in 2025. She was the 2022 SA Australian of the Year and SA Woman of the Year and the 2023 South Australian Scientist of the Year. In 2022 she was awarded Member of the Order of Australia and is a Fellow of the Academy of Health and Medical Sciences.



Professor Jodie Dodd FAHMS

Maternal Fetal Medicine Specialist, Clinical Director Women's and Babies Division, the Women's and Children's Hospital and Head of Department, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Adelaide University

Professor Jodie Dodd is a clinical academic Obstetrician and Medical Director of the Women's and Babies Division at the Women's and Children's Hospital (WCH) where she also works as Maternal Fetal Medicine subspecialist and is a current NHMRC Investigator Fellow. Prof Dodd is Head of Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Adelaide University and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences.

Her research evaluates healthcare interventions in pregnancy and pre-conception to improve health for women and their babies. She is an international authority in dietary interventions in pregnant women. She has been awarded more than 40 competitive research grants including continuous NHMRC Fellowship support (2006-2030) and authored ~190 peer-reviewed publications.



**Associate Professor
Alexia Peña**

*Paediatric Endocrinologist, Women's
and Children's Hospital and Associate
Professor, Adelaide University*

Associate Professor Alexia Peña is a paediatric endocrinologist and clinical academic at Adelaide University and the Women's and Children's Hospital, Adelaide. Her research focuses on paediatric obesity and its complications, particularly type 2 diabetes and polycystic ovary syndrome, with a strong emphasis on evidence-based guideline development and translation to clinical practice. She holds leadership roles in international guideline committees and regional professional societies and has over 100 peer-reviewed publications. Associate Professor Peña also leads national initiatives in medical student selection and admissions, including the implementation of multiple mini-interviews and University Clinical Aptitude Test governance across Australia and New Zealand.



**Associate Professor
Tarik Sammour**

*Colorectal Surgeon, Royal Adelaide
Hospital and Associate Professor,
Adelaide University*

Associate Professor Tarik Sammour is a colorectal surgeon at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, and an Associate Professor of Surgery at the University of Adelaide. He returned to Adelaide in 2017 after completing a CSSANZ fellowship in colorectal surgery and spending a year working at the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston where he received additional training in robotic colorectal surgery and advanced colorectal surgical oncology. Tarik has authored over 250 peer reviewed publications in surgical journals, and 9 book chapters. He continues to pursue an active research program, focusing specifically on clinical trials to improve patient outcomes after colorectal surgery.



Associate Professor Johan Verjans

Consultant Cardiologist, Royal Adelaide Hospital / Jones Radiology; Future Industry Fellow, Australian Institute for Machine Learning, University of Adelaide; Platform Leader AI, South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute

Associate Professor Johan Verjans is a cardiologist and scientist at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and Jones Radiology, renowned for bridging the gap between clinical medicine and foundational artificial intelligence. He served as Deputy Director (Medical) at the foundation of Australian Institute for Machine Learning (AIML) . He is currently the Future Industry Fellow at Adelaide University and the AI Platform Leader at SAHMRI.

A/Professor Verjans uniquely combines his expertise in clinical and molecular medicine with computer science to drive cross-disciplinary translational research. With a track record of high-impact publications in elite global venues across cardiology, computer vision, and medical AI, he leads a rapidly growing team dedicated to establishing the University of Adelaide as a global leader in AI-driven biosciences and healthcare developing and deploying AI.

Launching health careers and research breakthroughs

Adelaide University works at the forefront of creating and empowering South Australia's healthcare workforce through our world-class education and research.

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