

St Vincent's Clinic
Research Foundation

Annual Impact Report 2024



Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land, including the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, upon whose lands St Vincent's Clinic Research Foundation and St Vincent's Sydney Health Innovation Precinct are situated. We honour their enduring connection to the land, water, and culture, paying our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging.



Artist: Anthony Cain

This painting represents the St Vincent's Private Hospital working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve access to appropriate healthcare by providing a culturally inclusive environment that engages and values the community and creates opportunities for employment and further education and training with the aim at strengthening partnerships and closing the gap in health.




Who We Are

Established in 1992, the St Vincent's Clinic Research Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to advancing patient care through cutting-edge medical research.

As the research arm of St Vincent's Clinic, we are an integral part of a multidisciplinary centre of excellence, facilitating a direct connection between research and patient care. Our two-way bench-to-bedside approach empowers top doctors and researchers within St Vincent's Sydney Health Innovation Precinct to shape the future of medicine, creating a real-world impact on patient care.

Our Vision

Our grants are critical in advancing research projects in their infancy that require support to flourish. In turn, they enable researchers to establish a track record, allowing access to larger government and NFP grants. With over 30 years of expertise, we offer a unique perspective to identify research projects with strong potential. This vital research continues to unravel medical mysteries and prevention practices, improves patient care and treatments, and unlocks possible cures.



Dedicated
to defeating
tomorrow's
illness and
disease today.

Message From Our President

On behalf of the Advisory Board, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of the Foundation in 2024. My deepest gratitude goes to our researchers, clinicians, and allied health professionals for their unwavering dedication and commitment to advancing healthcare.

The core of our mission, embodied by the 'Bench to Bedside' concept, remains focused on bridging the gap between groundbreaking scientific discoveries and their practical application in patient care. This model is vital in transforming innovative ideas into tangible treatments that significantly improve the lives of patients.

Over the past 32 years, the Foundation has awarded over 490 grants, totalling more than \$21 million. These grants have supported early-stage research, fostered groundbreaking ideas, and catalysed breakthroughs that have had a profound impact on patient outcomes. We continue to take pride in directly linking laboratory research to clinical applications, advancing patient care to new heights.

I want to express my sincere thanks to A/Prof Venessa Chin for her exceptional leadership as Chair of the Scientific Committee. Her dedication and expertise continue to guide our research efforts and ensure that the projects we fund have the highest potential to make a real difference in healthcare.

I also want to thank our independent Scientific Committee for their continued commitment to maintaining a rigorous and fair evaluation process. Their governance and expertise ensure that we fund research that is poised to create significant healthcare advancements.

A special thank you goes to our esteemed Advisory Board for their invaluable guidance. Your support is critical in shaping the Foundation's strategic direction and ensuring its continued success.

We are incredibly thankful for the Packer Family Foundation's generous donation of \$600,000 in memory of Sister Mary Bernice. This contribution will help fuel vital medical research, enabling the continued exploration of new treatments and innovative cures.

The Impact Report reflects the tangible outcomes of our collective efforts to advance medical knowledge and improve patient care. I am immensely proud of all we've accomplished together and grateful for the ongoing support that enables us to make a difference.

Warmest regards,



**A/Prof Brett Courtenay OAM
President**



Message From Our CEO

St Vincent's Clinic and the St Vincent's Clinic Research Foundation are proud to continue playing a vital role as part of the St Vincent's Sydney Health Innovation Precinct in Darlinghurst. Together, we are dedicated to advancing healthcare and research. The Clinic cares for up to 4,000 patients each day, supported by 343 accredited doctors across more than 20 specialties. Our ongoing commitment ensures we deliver meaningful health outcomes and improve access to equitable services for individuals and communities.

As a health promotion charity, the St Vincent's Clinic Research Foundation is determined to advance research that enhances patient care and drives clinical excellence. This year, we have broadened our impact by funding transformative projects in cancer, cardiovascular disease, and innovative treatments for chronic illnesses. Collaborating closely with St Vincent's Public and Private Hospitals and leading research institutions on the Darlinghurst Precinct, we identify emerging priorities and support research that focuses on improving patient outcomes.

The demand for research funding remains high and the application process is highly competitive, reflecting the outstanding calibre of the applications we receive. Our Grant Recipients are clinicians, researchers and multidisciplinary team members. These projects empower leaders in nursing, allied health, and other specialties, promoting teamwork and innovation to improve patient outcomes.

In 2024, we are also deeply honoured by a generous \$600,000 donation from the Packer Family Foundation in memory of Sister Mary Bernice. This remarkable contribution will significantly enhance our ability to fund pioneering medical research and support the development of new treatments and cures over the next five years.

None of these achievements would be possible without the generosity of our donors. Your steadfast support enables us to nurture bright minds and fund transformative research that makes a tangible difference. Whether through financial contributions, advocacy, or engagement, your involvement is essential to our mission. Together, we can continue to drive discovery, advance clinical care, and build a healthier, more equitable future for all.

Thank you for being part of our mission.

Regards,



Ms Katie Viviers
CEO



Our Advisory Board



A/Prof Brett Courtenay OAM
(President, SVCRF)



Mr Russell Aboud



Mr Leigh Birtles



Mr Michael Coombes



Ms Gail Hambly
(Chair, SVC & SVCRF)



Mr Ted Harris AC



Ms Mim Haysom



Mrs Elizabeth Lewin
(Treasurer)



Dr Alan Meagher



Dr Matthew Miles



Mrs Ros Packer AC



Ms Katie Viviers
(CEO, SVC & SVCRF)

Our Advisory Board provides strategic advice and recommendations to the SVC Research Foundation Board, which comprises:

Mr Geoffrey Deakin
Ms Gail Hambly
Ms Suzanne Holden
Ms Linda Patat
Ms Katie Viviers



Bridging the gap
from bench to
bedside through
translational
research.



490+
grants awarded

32
years of breaking
boundaries

\$21m
funding medical
breakthroughs

A-Z
supporting uncharted
research of all kinds

Projects You Have Helped Fund in 2024

Prof Christopher Hayward

St Vincent's Centre for Applied Medical Research

How to improve the safety of life-saving heart pumps in patients with severe heart failure

Dr Melinda Tursky

St Vincent's Centre for Applied Medical Research

Defining the role of newly discovered ageing-acquired genetic defects in blood to improve the treatment of anaemia, a common health burden in older adults in our community and globally

A/Prof Kavitha Muthiah

St Vincent's Health Network Sydney

Improving outcomes in patients with mechanical heart pumps by reducing adverse events

Prof Anthony Kelleher

St Vincent's Centre for Applied Medical Research

Assessing the features of the HIV reservoir inside infected cells during early (primary) HIV infection

A/Prof Mayoora Namasivayam

Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute

Improving therapeutic decision-making in aortic valve stenosis

Dr Kazuo Suzuki

St Vincent's Centre for Applied Medical Research

Development of a nanopore-based next-generation sequence (NGS) test for HIV-1 drug resistance mutation detection on dried blood spot (DBS)

Dr Christopher Muir

Garvan Institute of Medical Research

A study to determine whether patients with low thyroid function experience improved quality of life when naltrexone is added to standard thyroid hormone replacement

Prof Alex Swarbrick

Garvan Institute of Medical Research

How do B cells behave in triple-negative breast cancer treated with immunotherapy?

Dr Sharissa Latham

Garvan Institute of Medical Research

Assessing novel treatments for rare appendiceal cancers

Dr Jacinta Perram

St Vincent's Health Network Sydney

A study to assess when patients undergoing stem cell transplants are most likely to develop low bone density

Dr Etienne Masle Farquhar

Garvan Institute of Medical Research

Revealing the hidden causes of gout and arthritis flares using cutting-edge sequencing technologies

Prof Richard J Harvey

St Vincent's Health Network Sydney

Characterising the immune system drivers of chronic rhinosinusitis with nasal polyps using advanced single-cell sequencing technologies

Dr Brendan Clifford

St Vincent's Health Network Sydney

An Open-Label Safety and Feasibility Pilot Trial of Oral Naltrexone-Bupropion Combination Pharmacotherapy for Methamphetamine Use Disorder

Dr Lauren Christie

St Vincent's Health Network Sydney

RAISE- Robotic Arm Intervention for Stroke Recovery: A pilot feasibility randomised controlled trial

Mr Alejandro Vasquez-Hernandez

St Vincent's Health Network Sydney

Access to Oral Health Services and Oral Health-Related Quality of Life In People Experiencing Homelessness

Mr Nabin Karki

The Kinghorn Cancer Centre

Improving Quality of Life in Autologous Haematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant for Multiple Sclerosis



Our goal is to raise \$20,000,000 in 10 years to fund \$2,000,000 worth of research annually.

\$25.6M

Net assets
as at 30 June 2024

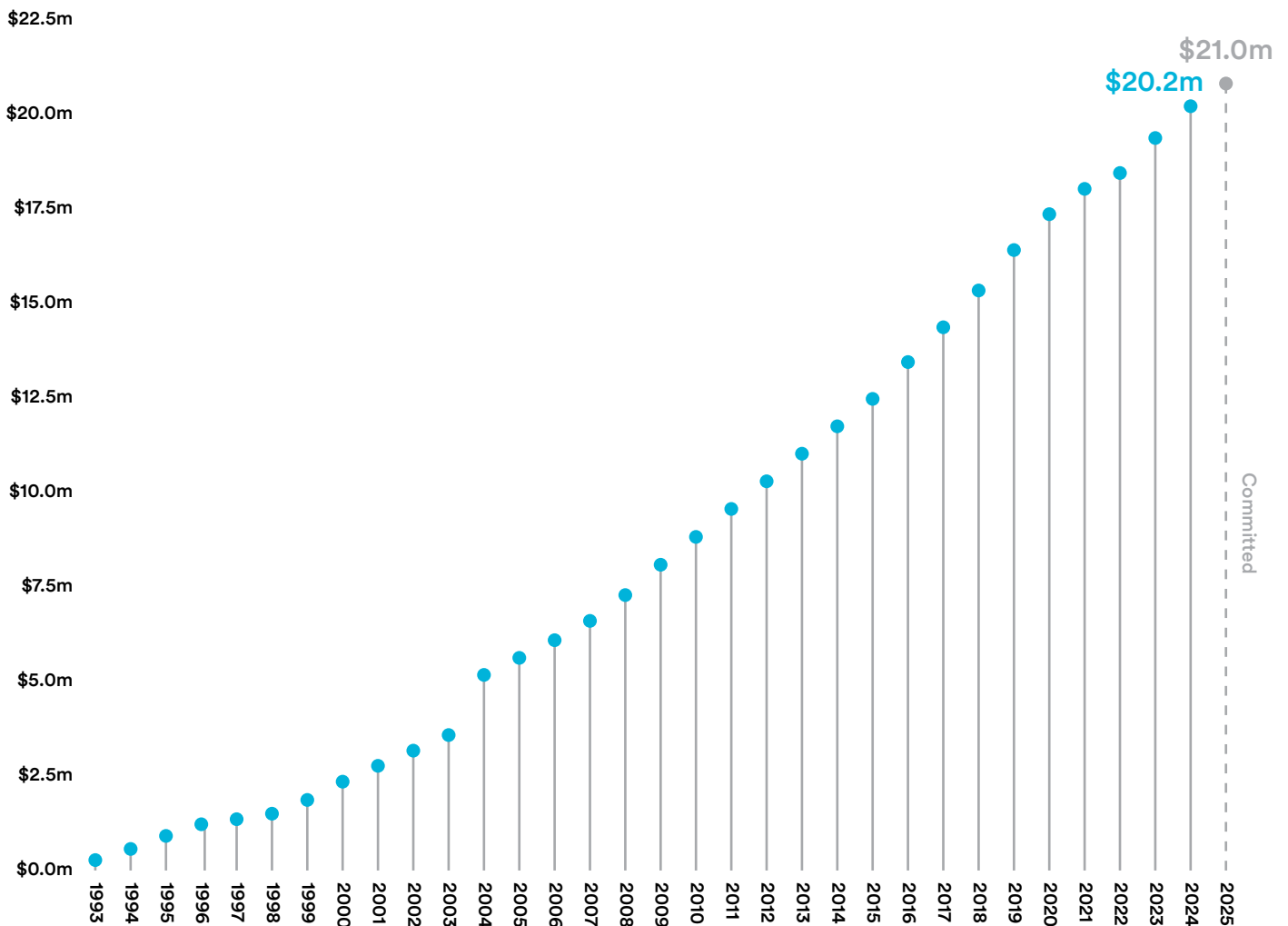
\$830K

Grants awarded
FY 2024

\$246K

Operating expenses
FY 2024

Cululative Grant Distribution Since 1993



For more information on our financials, please see the audited reports available on the ACNC website.

Improving Diagnosis and Treatment of Aortic Stenosis

Aortic stenosis is a heart condition that occurs when the aortic valve, which controls blood flow from the heart to the rest of the body, becomes narrowed. This narrowing makes the heart work harder to pump blood, and if untreated, it can lead to serious complications such as heart failure or even death. The clinical challenge lies in accurately diagnosing the disease at an early stage when interventions could be more effective. Current diagnostic and therapeutic guidelines for aortic stenosis often lead to intervention at later stages, disregarding certain factors that could refine treatment decisions.

A/Prof Mayooran Namasivayam and his team at the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, supported by the St Vincent's Clinic Research Foundation, are working to address these challenges. Their innovative research focuses on improving our understanding of aortic stenosis by using advanced imaging and biological sampling techniques. By identifying new biomarkers, the study hopes to better predict which patients might benefit from early intervention, improving outcomes and offering tailored treatment options.

Over the past year, the team has made significant strides in their work. Blood samples from patients with aortic stenosis and healthy controls have been collected, building a strong foundation for detailed analyses. Preparations

for cutting-edge multi-omics profiling are underway to uncover molecular signatures linked to the disease.

Simultaneously, the team has collaborated with colleagues who have developed a unique animal model to explore how aortic stenosis affects the heart and responds to therapy in parallel with human data analyses. Early findings from this model have revealed how the heart adapts to changes in workload, providing crucial insights into disease mechanisms. These observations have been successfully linked to human studies, creating a bridge between laboratory discoveries and clinical practice.

"This grant has been pivotal in advancing our understanding of left atrial remodelling and in establishing a robust animal model, which lays the groundwork for long-term research collaborations," says A/Prof Namasivayam.





“The generous support from the St Vincent’s Clinic Research Foundation’s multidisciplinary grant has helped to elevate the profile of nurse-led research at St Vincent’s”

Ms Mary Hayes
Medical Oncology Primary Care
Clinical Nurse Consultant
St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney



Exploring the Gut Microbiome to Improve Cancer Treatment

Associate Professor Craig Haifer has always been fascinated by human health. Shortly after beginning his medical degree, he found immense fascination in the field of gastroenterology. What followed was a particular interest in the role of the gut microbiome in the development of gastrointestinal and systemic diseases.

A/Prof Haifer is now a Gastroenterologist and Hepatologist at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney and a Conjoint Associate Professor at the School of Clinical Medicine, University of New South Wales. In 2023, as an early career researcher, he received the Sister Mary Bernice, Packer Family Foundation Research Grant (\$120,000) awarded by St Vincent's Clinic Research Foundation to continue his work assessing the role of the microbiome and manipulating it through faecal microbiota transplantation (FMT) in cancer immunotherapy.

Cancer immunotherapy helps the patient's immune system fight cancer and has revolutionised therapy. However, it can come with unwanted side effects, including bowel inflammation.

A/Prof Haifer's study aimed to determine the safety and effectiveness of using orally administered FMT to treat bowel inflammation in patients undergoing immunotherapy. The seed funding from the foundation was vital in the successful applications for larger government funding which has enabled the research to progress past the safety phase, and team have now begun the world's first randomised trial using FMT in this field.

"Receiving support from the SVCRF allows us to establish research that is recognised worldwide and has the potential to improve patient outcomes. Local seed funding is essential to create a platform enabling the development of competitive and successful research funding."

A/Prof Craig Haifer



“The SVCRF grant has strengthened my profile as an early-career researcher and improved my chances of securing future funding.”

Dr Sofia Mason
Garvan Institute of Medical Research
SVCRF Grant Recipient



Advancing Treatments for Methamphetamine Use Disorder

St Vincent’s Clinic Research Foundation is proud to support innovative research exploring new treatment options for some of the most challenging health conditions. One such study, is investigating the potential of combining two widely available medications—naltrexone and bupropion—as a treatment for methamphetamine use disorder. The study was designed and delivered by Prof Nadine Ezard, Dr Brendan Clifford, Dr Liam Acheson, Dr Krista Siefried and the Alcohol and Drug Service clinical trial team Lucy Flood, Clare Smylie, Arabella McMahon and Teodora Zanesheva-Karamanleiva. This innovative research is showing promising results, offering new hope for individuals struggling with addiction.

Currently, there are no approved medications for methamphetamine use disorder, a condition that has a significant impact on individuals and communities. Recent research from the United States has explored combining a long-acting injectable form of naltrexone with bupropion, an oral medication. While the long-acting injectable form is unavailable in Australia, both medications are already combined in a tablet form for weight loss. This study, conducted at St Vincent’s Hospital Sydney, aimed to assess whether this combination could be a safe and effective treatment for methamphetamine use disorder.

The Research Status

The study enrolled 20 participants from a specialist outpatient stimulant treatment program at St Vincent’s Hospital Sydney Alcohol and Drug Service for a 12-week trial of daily oral naltrexone/bupropion. Throughout the trial, participants were carefully monitored for safety and adherence, with support provided through regular check-ins and a smartphone app. The results are promising: 15 participants completed the full 12 weeks of treatment and there were no significant safety concerns.

The team is currently analysing the data and preparing it for publication in 2025. Early findings suggest that the oral combination of naltrexone and bupropion is

a feasible and safe treatment for methamphetamine use disorder. This opens the door for further studies, including more extensive trials to assess the treatment’s efficacy. It also highlights the potential of repurposing existing medications to expand treatment options, even in lower-resource settings.

This research has also fostered important international collaborations with experts from Canada and the United States, strengthening the global reach of this research.

Looking Ahead

Building on these results, the research team is applying for additional funding to conduct a randomised controlled trial further to test the efficacy of the naltrexone/bupropion combination. This work, in collaboration with the National Centre for Clinical Research in Emerging Drugs (NCCRED), is helping to solidify St Vincent’s Hospital Sydney’s position as a global leader in addiction medicine research.

The project has also bolstered the career of 2024 SVCRF Grant Recipient Dr Brendan Clifford, an early-career nursing clinician-researcher, by providing critical support for his development as a leader in addiction medicine research.

This research highlights the importance of supporting clinical studies on addiction and mental health, helping to expand treatment options and improve outcomes for those affected. We are deeply grateful to our donors for making this vital work possible.

Dr Brendan Clifford, SVCRF Grant Recipient





“The SVCRF grant has been crucial in helping me generate the pre-clinical data needed to move my personalised pancreatic cancer therapies toward clinical testing.”

Dr Sean Porazinski
Garvan Institute of Medical Research
SVCRF Grant Recipient



Bench to Bedside Panel Discussion

Our annual event at The Mint is a highlight in the calendar as we hear from current researchers and the incredible impact they are having today on patient outcomes.

This year's event featured A/Prof Mayooran Namasivayam and A/Prof Venessa Chin, discussing the role of artificial intelligence in healthcare.



Our Research Partners

St Vincent's Sydney Health Innovation Precinct is defined by our shared values and heritage. The Sisters of Charity originally founded the core Precinct bodies because they saw the power of bringing together health care, research and education to break through complex health issues, and their vision continues today.

We leverage our flexibility in funding the best projects across the Precinct.



Garvan Institute
of Medical Research



ST VINCENT'S
HOSPITAL
SYDNEY



ST VINCENT'S
HEALTH NETWORK
SYDNEY



ST VINCENT'S
PRIVATE HOSPITAL
SYDNEY



Victor Chang
Cardiac Research Institute

Philanthropy support ensures that we continue to champion healthcare trailblazers whose research projects are improving the health outcomes of individuals and communities worldwide.

Thank you to the individuals, organisations and trusts for their generous contributions towards medical research in 2024.



St Vincent's Clinic
Research Foundation

St Vincent's Clinic Research Foundation is a registered charity
with Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) Item 1 status.
All donations \$2 and over are tax deductible.



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