

# newsletter

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2011

## The Hawkesbury Canoe Classic Association presents Arrow with a \$303,000 donation!

The Hawkesbury Canoe Classic (HCC) smashed its own record and exceeded all expectations by presenting Arrow's Vice President, Mark O'Hara, with a cheque for a massive \$303,000.00 at the Association's presentation dinner on the 20th November, 2010.



HCC Presentation Dinner L to R: Kent Heazlett, Mark O'Hara and Caroline Kessler

Mark was overwhelmed by the donation from the HCC which was held on the 23rd and 24th October, 2010.

"Not only is this huge amount the largest donation ever received from the HCC, bringing the total donated by the HCC to Arrow to \$2.7 million, but the figure also holds great significance for the alliance between the HCC and Arrow.

For those who aren't aware, 303 is the number of the boat that Arrow representatives have paddled in since the 2001 event. The Arrow board members who have paddled in boat 303 include past Arrow president, Heidi Fisse, (who first used the number because it was easy to remember), current director and transplant patient Darren Williams and current Vice President Mark O'Hara.

The fact that the HCC have recognised the significance of the number 303 also pays tribute to all those from the Arrow 'family' who have been involved in the race and its organisation over many years.

As always, Arrow is extremely grateful to all persons involved in the organisation and paddling of the HCC each year. Our sincere thanks go to event coordinator Caroline Kessler; Association president, Kent Heazlett; Association secretary Wendy McLean and to all the Committee members who spend many hours of their own time throughout the year ensuring the event is safe, enjoyable and more successful than the last.

Special thanks go to all paddlers and their landcrew for their participation both in the paddle and in raising funds which Arrow gratefully applies to research projects each year.

The Arrow board has wasted no time in allocating funding from the 2010 \$303,000

donation. At the board meeting in December it was unanimously agreed that Arrow will continue funding the Arrow-HCC Research Scientist position within the Blood Stem Cell and Research Unit, Department of Haematology & Bone Marrow Transplantation, St Vincent's Hospital Sydney, and will continue the support of PhD students conducting their research into leukaemia and stem cell therapy with 2011 Arrow-HCC PhD scholarship recipients to be confirmed in April.

In addition, the HCC donation will be used to purchase at least five new pieces of medical research equipment desperately needed by researchers within the Cancer Research Unit at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney. The equipment includes:

1. A dissecting microscope
2. Minus 80° freezer
3. Refrigerated bench top centrifuges
4. Cytospin centrifuges
5. Low O<sup>2</sup> incubator

The need for the above research equipment is paramount so these items will be purchased within the coming months. Further research projects are currently being assessed by the Arrow board, and more of the HCC's \$303,000 donation will be applied after careful consideration. Thank you Hawkesbury Canoe Classic for making this research and these equipment purchases a reality.

Arrow would also like to thank the Armidale annual paddlers and landcrew whose dinner was held on Friday 3 September, 2010, in the TAS Dining Hall where Will Warrick and Jack Abbott

presented a cheque for \$20,000, on behalf of the Count Charitable Foundation, to Wendy McLean in support of Arrow's work. With Count's support, the TAS School coordinated / Armidale paddlers group has raised a huge \$167,000 over 5 years.

## donations in memoriam

We gratefully acknowledge donations received in memory of:

- Katherine Robertson
- Victor Jacob
- Noel Frith
- Cara Swartz
- Greg James
- Paul Tenukest

## 2011 events

Hawkesbury Canoe Classic, Saturday 22nd – Sunday 23rd October.  
Light the Night, Monday 31st October.  
Arrow AGM, Friday 18th November.  
Customs Brokers and Forwarders Council of Australia (CBFCA) Black Tie Charity Dinner - 9th Sept, 2011 at NSW Parliament House.  
For info contact Paul Zalai on (02) 9975 3075 or email: pzalai@cbfca.com.au

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- Celebrating 35 years of bone marrow transplants at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney. Observations by HCC Committee President, Kent Heazlett.
- Arrow meditation CDs for sale.
- City of Sydney Council sponsors the Tracey Scone Wig Library.
- Helping Arrow just got easier!

  
Tracey Scone  
Wig Library

Story ideas & photos are welcome.  
Please contact Gloria Vincent:  
gvincent@arrow.org.au  
or phone (02) 8382 2696.

# Reflecting on Arrow's past as we enter a new decade

Although it's a long road to a cure, researchers at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, have achieved many important milestones since the establishment of the Arrow Bone Marrow Transplant Foundation 24 years ago. As Arrow enters a new decade we reflect on, and pay tribute to, the efforts of the many dedicated supporters responsible for building a charity which continues to fund research scholarships and grants, patient support services, nursing scholarships, information guides and transplant seminars.

## Early years of the Arrow Bone Marrow Transplant Foundation

By Ian Nivison-Smith, former Arrow Treasurer and current Senior Analyst / Statistician, Australasian Bone Marrow Transplant Recipient Registry (ABMTRR)

The 'Australian Bone Marrow Transplant Foundation' (ABMTF), as it was originally named, was officially established at the inaugural meeting held on 25th February, 1987. The first President of the ABMTF was Victor Jacob, and the Vice President was Bob Warren. The inaugural Secretary was Meredith Ashby, the Treasurer was Julie Jones, and the six remaining committee members were: Professor J C Biggs, Dr Kerry Atkinson, Peter Grant, Roger Whitfeld, Barbara Crouch and Barrie Beck.

Professor Biggs and Dr Atkinson provided the medical expertise to advise the ABMTF on developments in the treatment of leukaemia and other serious bone marrow diseases, particularly by bone marrow transplantation. By June 1988 membership had grown to 119 and income was \$95,918 of which \$79,964 were donations used to support research staff at St Vincent's Hospital Haematology Department, Sydney.

Pauline Atkinson was co-opted to assist with publicity and fundraising to provide funding for several staff working within St Vincent's Hospital Haematology Department under the direction of Dr Kerry Atkinson. Barrie Beck devoted much time and effort to raising funds through the Northern NSW Group based in Newcastle. A highlight of 1989 was the Brisbane to Melbourne Bike Ride which raised \$80,000.

In 1990 Merri Ashby was appointed to the position of Executive Officer. The Foundation

established an office at 16 Leichhardt St, Darlinghurst, which remains home to the Foundation. In 1992, Victor Jacob resigned as President and the position was taken up by Peter Grant and later by Barbara Crouch.

In 1993, Harold Smart introduced the Arrow Committee to the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic Association with the objective of requesting that part of the funds raised by the canoe paddle from Windsor to Brooklyn be donated to the Foundation. The Hawkesbury Canoe Classic has since become the major income source for the Foundation. In 1993, transplant recipient, Michael Quigley was elected as President and the name of the Foundation was changed to the 'Arrow Foundation'. Also during 1993, the Australian Bone Marrow Transplant Recipient Registry (which is a medical database that records all allogeneic and autologous BMT performed in Australia) was established and part funded by the Arrow Foundation. In 1995 the position of Executive Officer was taken up by Mim Merrick.

In 1996, acknowledgement was given to Dr Kerry Atkinson, who resigned from the Arrow Foundation and departed from Australia to take up a challenging position as Director of Clinical Transplantation with biotechnology company Systemix in California, USA. The Foundation provided \$60,000 as continuing financial support for data collectors and analysts at the St Vincent's BMT Data Research Unit, as well as



Left Prof. James Biggs; Right Dr Kerry Atkinson.

\$30,000 to fund the ongoing research of two haematology scientists based at the Garvan Institute. Two former patients and Foundation supporters, Steven Smith and Lisa Cuthbertson, participated in the Transplant Games and both won Gold, Silver and Bronze medals.

In 1997 and 1998 the Foundation continued to receive major donations from the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic and many other fundraising activities.

Currently the Arrow Bone Marrow Transplant Foundation, as it is now named, stands as a powerhouse of fundraising which has provided steadfast and absolutely essential support to patients and researchers for many years.

This brief outline of the early years of the Arrow Bone Marrow Transplant Foundation was written using reports and records of meetings kindly provided by current CEO Robyn Flood.

## Support the work of St Vincent's Hospital's Haematology Researchers

A book titled *The Evolution of Haematology at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney: 1857-2010*, written by Professor James Biggs and Alan Concannon, will be published shortly. It outlines the development of this specialty worldwide and at St Vincent's Hospital and includes sections on Bone Marrow Transplantation, Foundations and Registries and reminiscences of more than fifty people who have contributed to the changes since World War 2. All proceeds will directly support St Vincent's Hospital Haematology Research.

If you are interested in receiving a copy please contact St Vincent's Hospital's Haematology Office on: (02) 8382 2677 or email [mpayten@stvincents.com.au](mailto:mpayten@stvincents.com.au).

## Farewell Dr Adam Bryant

In 2010, Arrow/HCC PhD scholarship recipient, Dr Adam Bryant, was awarded the St Vincent's Clinic Clinical Research Excellence award (registrar medical category) for 2010. The following note of thanks was written by Adam as he embarks on the next stage of his journey:

"I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to the Arrow Foundation, and in particular the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic. Arrow has supported my research for the last three years while I have been working on my PhD entitled 'The Role of MicroRNAs in Acute Myeloid Leukaemia'.

I took on this project after completing the training

required to become a specialist haematologist. This project has been the challenge of my life. After training since I was 17 to become a doctor, and then a specialist, I had to put all of that aside and start from scratch when learning how to become a scientist; but I thought that it was important to do. The sort of research that is being done in Professor Ma's haematology lab at St Vincent's Hospital is crucial to help advance our understanding of the diseases that we look after from day to day as doctors.

With Professor's Ma's supervision, and your support, I have been able to make some important findings in the biology of Acute Myeloid Leukaemia. The PhD has also taught me many skills that I will be able to use in the day to day care of leukaemia patients. One of the important techniques I have learned is how to design and implement assays to make genetic

diagnoses in leukaemia patients to help determine their prognosis and direct specific treatments. It has also allowed me to manage patients and to assess new treatments with a renewed and more critical eye – to think outside the square. It is with your support that I was fortunate to be recognised with the St Vincent's Clinic Clinical Research Excellence award (registrar category) for my work both on the specific PhD project and other research projects I have been involved with in the hospital."

I will be starting at Vancouver General Hospital Bone Marrow Transplant Unit as the Bone Marrow Transplant and Leukaemia Fellow. My aim is that this training will thoroughly consolidate my training in Bone Marrow Transplantation, and help me bring back new skills and ideas to Australia. I would like to thank you for all of your support over the last few years.

Make a donation today! Visit [www.arrow.org.au](http://www.arrow.org.au) or complete the form overleaf.

# Light the Night

## Light the Night grant sheds more light on the role of genes in Acute Leukaemia

On October 11th 2010, the annual Light the Night Benefit Concert, inspired by Matthew Rennie, raised \$20,000 to support a promising new leukaemia research project by the St Vincent's Hospital Haematology Research Team at Darlinghurst, Sydney, titled: Gene Control in Acute Leukaemia.

Proceeds from the 2010 Light the Night benefit concert will support the ongoing project which aims to examine how genes called microRNAs may promote cell growth and inhibit maturation of bone marrow stem cells leading to the development of acute leukaemia as outlined below by Professor David Ma.

## Light the Night resources grant: Gene Control in Acute Leukaemia

By Professor David Ma, Director Blood Stem Cell and Cancer Research Unit, St Vincent's Hospital Sydney.

MicroRNAs are recently discovered small regulatory genes which can contribute to the development of cancers. Our latest research on genetic profiling of acute leukaemia using gene chip technology has identified several microRNAs in several types of acute leukaemia. Significant progress has been made since this original discovery. Importantly, experiments conducted so far have pinpointed several microRNAs that may have a role in the development of human leukaemia. We found that four microRNA genes were increased in an immature type of acute myeloid leukaemia and their levels decreased when cells were induced to mature into monocytes, suggesting that these genes prevent cells to mature and die. In a separate discovery, very high levels of a microRNA called miR-10a was found in one type of acute myeloid leukaemia with a unique gene mutation. We showed that this gene promotes the survival of this leukaemia.

Based on our promising data so far, further research on these small regulatory genes in acute leukaemia may lead to their use as new disease markers and potential therapeutic targets for customised treatment. We currently have two PhD students, and two post-doctoral scientists working on this project. Our work on linking microRNAs to monocytic cell differentiation has been accepted for publication (listed below) and the Arrow Bone Marrow Transplant Foundation and Light the Night Benefit Concert's contribution is duly acknowledged.

Expression profiling of cytogenetically normal AML identifies microRNAs that target genes involved in monocytic differentiation'. M.Lutherborrow, A.Bryant, V.Jayaswal, D.Agapiou, C.Palma, Y.Yang, D.Ma American Journal of Hematology, 2010.

This year's Light the Night charity benefit concert will be held on Monday 31st October. Please visit <http://www.lighththenight.com.au/> for details closer to the event.

## Supporting our nurses

Arrow is pleased to continue the funding of nursing scholarships of up to \$1375 per student for registered nurses employed in the field of blood and marrow transplantation. The 2011 scholarship programme will support six nurses aiming to further their studies in the areas of chemotherapy and other systemic treatments in cancer care or blood and marrow transplantation. Both courses are offered through the College of Nursing.

For more information email: [info@arrow.org.au](mailto:info@arrow.org.au)

## Commonwealth Bank Coke Memorial 2010



L to R: Gary Sheppard, Wayne King and Robyn Flood

Over 80 enthusiastic surfers took part in another great event which was held in testing 0.5 - 1 metre surf conditions at Wamberal beach over the weekend of the 30th October, 2010.

The Dave 'Coke' Wards Memorial (which is now named the Commonwealth Bank Coke Memorial in acknowledgement of the Commonwealth Bank's part sponsorship of the annual event) is Arrow's longest associated fundraiser and in 2010 continued to fund important research projects into better treatments and a cure for leukaemia by raising over \$8000.

The most recent outcome of the event's 21 year collaboration with Arrow has been the publication of a scientific paper outlining new

research findings by Arrow funded scientists in the respected American Journal of Hematology, 2010.



Arrow receives no government funding

