

# RCH Alumni

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Newsletter – February 2020

Photo by Gigi and Robin Williams.

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## The 2019-20 RCH Alumni Executive

President	Ruth Wraith OAM
Vice-President and Treasurer	Jim Wilkinson AM
Honorary Secretary	Garry Warne AM (garry@warnefamily.net)
Hugo Gold	
Kevin Collins	
Christine Unsworth AM	
Bronwyn Hewitt	
Tony Cull	
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Caroline Clarke	

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Editor – Garry Warne

Graphic design – Dan Warne

Published by the Alumni Association of the Royal Children's Hospital  
Melbourne



Ruth Wraith OAM

## From the 2020 president

With the RCH 150th Anniversary celebrations to commence in February 2020 the Alumni Executive has been reflecting on ground breaking contributions of members to paediatric health at RCH and also nationally and internationally.

As Hugo Gold recorded in his President's Report for the recent AGM (see below) there was an enthusiastic response to the Alumni-initiated 'Turning Points' podcast project which is proceeding on schedule with generous financial support from the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation. 'Way Back When', a company of consulting historians, is providing professional technical expertise to Turning Points.

Even though it is an expensive exercise, the Executive is currently considering establishing Turning Points as an ongoing activity of the Alumni Association as a contribution to RCH Heritage and Archives. A related project under review is to invite members to write a memoir of significant advances in which they were involved at RCH. These would be published in the Newsletter and collated for the RCH Archives.

However, we have realised that the earlier story and records of the Alumni Association are currently nowhere to be found with only snippets of information residing in the memory of a handful of our senior members. If you or some one you know are able to provide any information could you contact Garry Warne - [garry@warnefamily.net](mailto:garry@warnefamily.net). We would appreciate it - and thank you. Hopefully we will be able to add another facet to the rich history of RCH.



A beautiful November evening saw over forty Alumni meet for the AGM in the bucolic setting of the Kew Golf Club which was followed by spouses/partners and friends joining members for the Annual Gala Dinner. The lively social atmosphere was enhanced by Professor Kathryn North AC (pictured, left) who, in a scintillating presentation, brought many of us up to date with the journey of the development of genomic medicine and also introduced us to the unfolding horizons in this area of research and clinical practice. Kevin Collins introduced Kathryn outlining her deep and influential professional career and her current role as Director of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute.

The 2020 Executive plan to continue to engage with and develop the wide range of activities that have evolved in recent years including the popular lunch gatherings with a speaker, Newsletter, Turning Points, AGM Gala Dinner, participating in and contributing to RCH Heritage Committee, Vernon Collins Oration, Children's Rights International and to actively liaise with the wider Hospital community as appropriate.

On a personal note, I am honoured to be President for the forthcoming year. RCH provides leadership in so many ways and the Alumni members have continued this tradition by electing, for the first time, an allied health member as president, and as we understand it, a woman president for only the second time.

My greetings and warmest wishes as the holiday season approaches and 2020 beckons around the corner.





# Retiring president's annual report for 2019

Hugo Gold

2019 has seen a continuing evolution of the RCH alumni into a broader based group with the inclusion of more senior professional non-medical colleagues. The Alumni are continuing to play a significant role for the RCH and have a strong relationship with the RCH foundation. We have had members attending the RCH1000 annual dinner, a bioethics hypothetical for the Friends of the CBC auxiliary and supported other foundation activities.

The alumni have been involved in the RCH 150th anniversary celebrations. We have been developing a podcast series highlighting significant "Turning Points" in paediatric care developed at the RCH. This will include contributions from our members who have been involved in the three main cultural shifts of Family-centred care, Team-based care and Consultant-led care. We had an amazing response from our membership to a request to inform us of the significant changes which had occurred during their careers.

The RCH foundation has generously continued to provide the venue for our luncheon speaker series. Thanks to Sue Hunt and her team for their continuing support. Thanks also to Dr. Matt Sabin, our executive sponsor, for his support and responsiveness.

## Membership

Our membership now stands at 185, an increase of 8. We were pleased to welcome 15 new members: Avihu Boneh, Jim Camarakis, Bronwyn Cathels, Margaret Deighton, John Fisher, Alexandra Giannini, Walter Heale, Nigel Hocking, Porpavai Kasiannan, Knowles Kerry, Christine Sanderson, Libby Smibert, Bambang Tridjaja, George Werther, and Purnamawati Sujud.

Sadly, eight of our members passed away in the past year. Vale Robert Kelly, Kester Brown, Ian McDonald, Fred Jensen, Ann Morgan, Rae Mathews, Reuben Glass and Ian Hopkins. All made outstanding contributions to paediatrics and will be fondly remembered. Our condolences to their families and loved ones.

We congratulate our seven colleagues who received Australian honours: Dr Nigel Hocking OAM, Dr Bernie Jenner OAM, Prof Ruth Bishop AC, Dr David McCredie AM, Prof James Wilkinson AM, Dr Pat Fair OAM, and Mrs Patricia Keith OAM.

## Events

The year's events began with the very enjoyable Annual Dinner, again held at the popular Kew Golf club. We were addressed by fellow alumnus Prof Jeffrey Rosenfeld AC who gave a wide-ranging talk based on his amazing career. He highlighted developments, challenges and opportunities in his fields of activity. These included the prevention and care of battlefield injuries, promoting medical education and care in developing countries, innovations in neurosurgery and leadership in biomedical engineering.

The lunchtime speaker series began in March. Ruth Wraith, our Vice President, told us of her wide-ranging experience of assisting children's recovery from trauma in disasters worldwide, from Australian bushfires to Tsunamis. Mike O'Brien, Director of Surgery, told us in May what health systems could learn from medical professionals, and in July, Julian Clarke AM, former CEO of News Corp and former RCH Foundation chairman addressed us. In his talk entitled "Our Connected World" he gave us an insight into the workings of our news media and the challenges faced by the rise of social media.

The Vernon Collins oration was held in October as a well-attended Grand Round. It was delivered by the Honorable Jennifer Coate AO, a former family court judge and Commissioner for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. She calmly detailed the horrific abuse of children in institutions and the cover up which often accompanied it. The audience was left sobered, troubled and saddened, but with the hope that the future would be different.

Future speakers include Prof Kathryn North AC at the 2019 annual dinner, and in March, Dr Knowles Kerry AAM on The Health of Antarctic Wildlife.

The Executive has once again done an outstanding job. Special thanks to the incomparable Honorary Secretary, Garry Warne, also Jim Wilkinson as Treasurer and Ruth Wraith, who has been a vibrant and thoughtful Vice President. They have been well supported by a highly engaged and active committee of Kevin Collins, Tony Cull, Bronwyn Hewitt and Christine Unsworth.

Finally, I wish to thank the Alumni for the opportunity of having been President for the last two years, and my gratitude to the Executive and committee who made it possible for me to fulfil the role. My best wishes to you all for a great future.





Boat builder, Viking Ship Museum, Roskilde, Denmark  
Photo: Garry Warne

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# Clinical acumen combined with humility: Ian James Hopkins

3 Jun 1934 – 10 Nov 2019

Kevin Collins and Lloyd Shield

Dr Ian Hopkins, OAM, MD, FRACP, was the first in Australia to train and work exclusively as a paediatric neurologist. He was a person and clinician of such stature that his influence still permeates his chosen specialty.

An early hint of Ian's potential was the award of the Rhodes Ideal prize in his final year at Camberwell Grammar School, for the best all-rounder displaying the most gentlemanly attributes. Ian said that he was inspired to study medicine after a school camp where he assisted the medical officer there, Richard Newing, an eminent Victorian plastic surgeon.

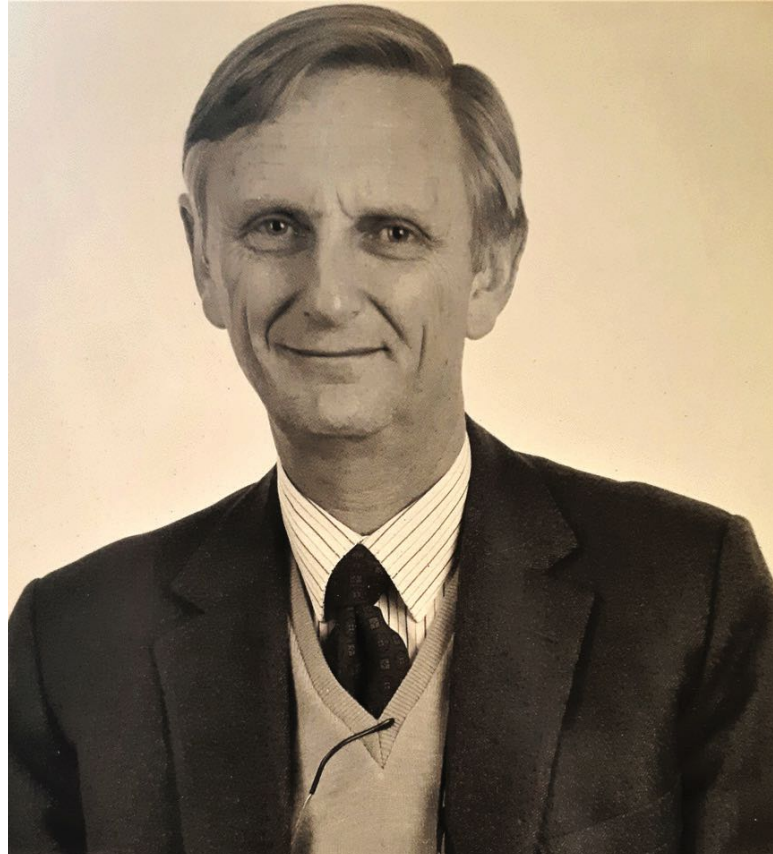
In 1957, he graduated with honours from the University of Melbourne, winning the Ryan prizes in medicine and surgery. In 1962, after residencies at St Vincent's Hospital and the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH), he received his doctor of medicine degree and the David Grant Medal from the University of Melbourne. Later, Ian qualified as a member, then a fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians and joined the Australian Paediatric Society and the Australian Association of Neurologists.

In November 1962, Ian married Barbara Stewart, a nurse at RCH, and they were later to have five children – Kate, Andrew, Christine, Paul and Susie.

Until the mid-1960s, there were no trained paediatric neurologists in Victoria. Vernon Collins, the first professor of paediatrics at the University of Melbourne, recognised this deficiency and convinced the talented young Dr Hopkins to become a paediatric neurologist.

In 1963-1964, with a Nuffield Foundation Travelling Fellowship, Ian worked in London at the Hammersmith Hospital's Nuffield Research Unit; at the Institute of Neurology, National Hospital, Queen Square; and at the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street.

In 1964-1965, with an RCH Uncle Bob's Fellowship, he trained under Dr David Clark, one of the fathers of paediatric neurology. Ian was first a trainee fellow in neurology at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, then, at Dr Clark's invitation, an instructor in the newly established Department of Neurology at the University of Kentucky in Lexington.



Ian Hopkins

With no hospital position available at RCH when Ian returned to Melbourne, Professor Collins again supported him, so that he became first assistant (senior lecturer) in the Department of Paediatrics. Ian was later employed by RCH and was appointed neurologist there in 1968. For a decade, he was the sole paediatric neurologist covering not just Melbourne, but also Victoria, Tasmania and southern NSW, until younger colleagues returned from overseas training.

When a Department of Neurology was formally established at RCH in 1977, he became its inaugural director until 1987, continuing as senior neurologist there until his retirement from the hospital in 2001. He maintained his private practice for a short time afterwards.

Ian did not see himself primarily as a researcher but nonetheless authored or co-authored more than 60 scientific papers. Two disorders carry his name – Hopkins syndrome (polio-like illness following asthma), and Pitt-Hopkins syndrome (genetic disorder with intellectual disability, distinctive facial features, and irregular breathing).

Despite his heavy workload, Ian made time for teaching trainee paediatricians, and his weekly tutorials for junior medical staff are remembered as the first regular departmental teaching sessions in the hospital. An annual seminar on practical topics in paediatric neurology for general paediatricians, begun by Ian in 1979, is now named the Hopkins Symposium in his honour.

In the 1980s, he increasingly turned his attention to childhood epilepsy. He had already established a high-quality paediatric electroencephalography (EEG) service in

Melbourne, introduced the ketogenic diet for uncontrolled epilepsy, and was developing a dedicated seizure clinic.

In 1983, in collaboration with biomedical engineers at RCH, Ian was instrumental in developing a video-EEG monitoring system. This was a seminal achievement and provided the standard equipment for seizure investigation in southern Australia for a decade. It was also the foundation of the current world-leading epilepsy and epilepsy surgery programs at RCH.

The esteem of Ian's colleagues, his strong administrative skills, intellectual capacity and even-handedness led to leadership roles within RCH as well as nationally and internationally. These included being chairman of the RCH Medical Staff Association, the Australian College of Paediatrics scientific program committee and the National Epilepsy Association, as well as being a founding board member of the International Child Neurology Association.

In 1994, he was awarded the prestigious RCH President's Medal, recognising his major contribution to the work and reputation of the hospital over a significant period. In 2003, the Peter Bladin Award, the highest honour of the Epilepsy Society of Australia, recognised his outstanding service to epilepsy in Australia. In 2010, the Medal of the Order of Australia was awarded to Ian "for service to medicine as a paediatric neurologist and through professional organisations".

As a neurologist, Ian was very efficient, being able to quickly identify the crucial information needed to reach a prompt diagnosis in his young patients. While at times this ability may have seemed magical to his colleagues, it simply arose from an exceptional combination of intellectual ability, patient rapport, knowledge and experience.

Ian was also a skilled woodworking craftsman, creating fine furniture and smaller decorative wooden objects. Using marquetry, he made plaques highlighting the crest of RCH and those of other medical organisations. Another tribute to his talents outside of medicine was the design and building of a mud-brick country house at Riddells Creek, north-west of Melbourne. Ian was heavily involved both as brickmaker and in the physical work of building.

Ian Hopkins would not want to be defined by a list of publications, syndrome names or honours awarded to him. His defining features were his outstanding clinical acumen combined with humility regarding his skills and knowledge, which were for sharing, not for self-aggrandisement.

He was always professional, calm and compassionate. Whether at the bedside, in the clinic or the office, he was warm and reassuring. He treated all colleagues with great respect, including junior and senior doctors, nurses, and allied health staff. Those who knew Ian well outside of his medical world saw a man who was unfailingly calm, never losing his composure or self-control. He was always generous in acknowledging those who had helped him throughout his career.

Through his remarkable personal and professional qualities, Ian Hopkins has had an enduring influence not only on his immediate colleagues, but over time, on the expanding community of Australian paediatric neurologists and paediatricians, together with the children they care for.

Ian is survived by his wife Barbara, their children, nine grandchildren and his sisters Barbara and Jeanette.

This tribute was written by Ian's colleagues Kevin Collins and Lloyd Shield, assisted by Ian's family and Brian Collopy, his long-time friend.

# Sacra Infermeria – the Knight Hospitaller’s Hospital in Valletta, Malta

Jeff Prebble

Retired Paediatrician, Toowoomba, Queensland

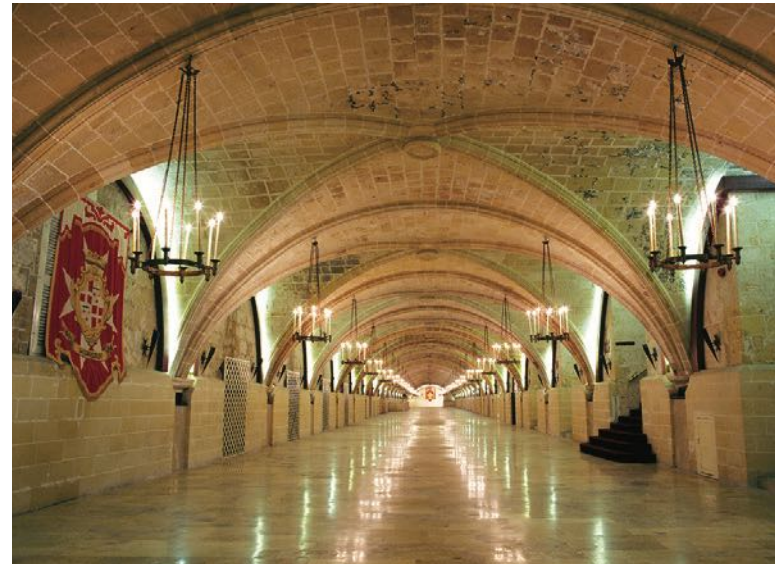
The Order of Saint John, Knights Hospitaller is the oldest surviving ecumenical Christian Order of Chivalry. Its role “to serve our lords the sick and our lords the poor” was expressed for centuries in their hospitals and hospices. The Order was the pioneer in hospital innovations and high quality care. I recently had the opportunity to visit its most famous hospital, Sacra Infermeria (the Order’s Hospital in Valletta).

The Hospitallers provided care for pilgrims and crusaders in Jerusalem from 1048 till their expulsion in 1291 by the Moslem Mamluks. After two centuries in Rhodes (1309-1522), they were forced out by the Ottoman Turks and then occupied Malta from 1530 to 1798. Following the successful defence against the Ottoman Turks in the Siege of Malta in 1565, extensive reconstruction was performed including the establishment of a new city on the coast near Fort St Elmo and Fort St Angelo. This city, now the capital, was called Valletta after Grand Master Fra’ Jean de Vallette who led the Hospitallers during the siege.



Malta

In 1574 the Sacra Infermeria was built. It accepted patients free of charge from Malta & Gozo as well as foreigners irrespective of social status, finances, creed, religion or nationality. However, I was told no women were admitted!



The Long Ward of the Sacred Infirmary in 2019, and above, in 1588

The medical care was famed throughout Europe and Sacra Infermeria was considered the foremost hospital of Europe in its day, legendary for its innovation and excellence. Malta became the health resort and convalescent centre for the wealthy. Initially it held 181 beds till 1666 when it was enlarged into one continuous hall later referred to as the Long Ward which was 500 feet in length with ceilings more than 30 feet. By 1787 it had 563 beds which could be increased to 914 in an emergency.

Every patient had a canopied bed to oneself, an unheard of luxury in those days (most hospitals placed 2-3 patients in a bed, the Hotel-Dieu in Paris reported 12 patients to a bed, taking it in turns to lie down). Patients were provided with a woollen mattress and blankets. Cutlery & utensils were made of silver for hygienic reasons and the diet was described as “lavish” with only the best food served. Believing pleasant surroundings benefited recovery, the Order used the greatest artists of the era (such as Caravaggio) to adorn the hospital with eighty-five paintings depicting episodes from the Order’s history hung along the Great Ward in summer and decorative woollen tapestries in the cold weather. Strict discipline of patients was enforced with displayed rules and regulations. Expulsion resulted if noisy or caught playing dice, cards or chess.



The hospital developed a reputation for operative surgery. Modern ophthalmology originated with the surgeons of the Order in Malta. The first chair of Ophthalmic Surgery in Europe was held by Joseph Barth, a Knight from Malta. Without anaesthetics, surgical expertise was demonstrated by the speed & efficiency in operations (e.g. amputations, removing cataracts, removing the stone from the bladder or kidney). Michel Grima could remove a kidney stone in 2 ½ minutes. The Hospitallers developed improved methods of cauterizing wounds.

The Order's vows of chastity, poverty and obedience enabled an efficient and dedicated hospital administration.



Engraving by Matthacus Merian 1646

In the 17th century a training school for physicians and surgeons was developed with Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner, at his own expense in 1676, founding the School of Anatomy and Surgery in Valletta utilizing autopsies.

Nursing care was also considered of great importance and the Convent of St Ursula, attached to the Sacra Infermeria trained many young women to care for the ill – a legacy extending to Florence Nightingale, founder of modern nursing, who was installed as a Lady of Grace in the British Order of Saint John in 1901.

The Order undertook social service to the immediate community and beyond, distributing food, medications and clothing to the poor, widows and children. Public health was another area of innovation by the Hospitallers with uniform standards for licensing in medicine, surgery and pharmacy; comprehensive measures for quarantine and isolation to control infectious diseases and hygienic regulations for burial of the dead.

The Order of Saint John surrendered Malta to General Napoleon Bonaparte on 12th June 1798. The French took over the hospital and converted it into a military hospital for wounded French soldiers. This lasted 2 years until the French surrendered to British Lord Nelson in 1800. Subsequently the hospital was used as a hospital in the Crimean War and World War I.

During the latter, Malta developed the largest system of war hospitals in the British Empire. 4,000 casualties from Gallipoli alone arrived in May 1915, and between June and September 1915, some 22,000 patients arrived in Malta.

In 1920 Sacra Infermeria became the headquarters for the Malta Police Force. In World War II it took direct hits and was evacuated, though tunnels between the hospital and Fort St Elmo accommodated a series of wartime shelters for Maltese families from the fierce aerial bombardment carried out by the Axis forces. Today it houses the Mediterranean Conference Centre.







Raccoons, Stanley park, Vancouver, Canada  
Photo: Garry Warne

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# Improving children's welfare in Vietnam and Cambodia

Garry Warne

From 2006-2011, RCH International delivered training for a broad range of staff at the National Hospital for Paediatrics (NHP) in Hanoi, funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies.

The strong relationship between staff at RCH and NHP had been developing since 1995 and many staff exchanges between the two hospitals had occurred. Atlantic Philanthropies had previously funded RCHI to design a comprehensive 5-year staff training program in preparation for the rebuilding and expansion of the hospital.

The program was carefully planned in close consultation with the administration and staff of the Vietnamese hospital, and with involvement and support of the Vietnamese Ministry of Health.

For its implementation, project management was outsourced to the Nossal Institute of Global Health and Brendan Allen, an experienced manager employed by the Nossal Institute, was based in Hanoi for 3 years.

The model chosen for all components was train-the-trainer. As a result of the project, a Project Management Unit was created at NHP, 19 senior staff members at NHP gained the MBA, the Advanced Paediatric Life Support training course was established as a sustainable nation-wide program, a paediatric nursing course was established with Ministry of Health accreditation, an autism early intervention program was initiated, audiology was introduced, a multi-disciplinary approach to oncology was developed, infection control was

strengthened, some hundreds of Vietnamese doctors and nurses received English language training, the biochemistry and genetics laboratories gained NATA accreditation, and both screening and laser therapy for retinopathy of prematurity were established.

A significant number of Vietnamese doctors, nurses and scientists came to RCH for clinical and technical training and many members of the RCH staff spent time in Vietnam. Prof Glenn Bowes, Prof Christine Kilpatrick, Mr John Stanway and Prof James Angus, the Dean of Medicine, all visited Vietnam as part of the project.

A component of the project that was proposed by us was Child Protection. We had become aware that staff at the hospital had never received any training in the recognition of non-accidental injury and sexual abuse and there was initially a degree of denial on the part of hospital directors that Vietnam had a problem of child abuse.

A discussion between staff from the Gatehouse Centre and one hospital Director elicited an acknowledgment that there was in fact a very large hidden problem and that if help was offered, it would be gratefully received.

In discussion with senior Vietnamese colleagues and leaders, it was agreed that we would bring clinicians to the hospital to teach the staff about the signs of non-accidental injury, the circumstances in which it occurred, and what the responsibilities of staff who did recognize it should be.

Dr Anne Smith and Dr Andrea Smith from the Victorian Forensic Paediatric Medical Service and A/Prof David Wells OAM, a Senior Forensic Physician from the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine gave lectures and tutorials in Hanoi.

They also asked the hospital administrators to think through which agencies other than hospital staff would need to be involved (police, social agencies, judiciary) in serious cases. At the time, NHP had not yet developed any policies or procedures covering this and the police were rarely if ever called to the hospital.

I had come to know The Hon. Alastair Nicholson AO RFD QC, former Chief Justice of the Family Court through my work with transgender patients at RCH, and he was more than willing to come to Vietnam and assist us in raising the issues related to child protection with members of the Vietnamese judiciary and the Ministry of Justice.

With his help, we organised two large workshops in Hanoi and also held discussions with senior officials in relevant Vietnamese Government Departments concerning these issues.

The workshop in 2011, sponsored by the National assembly of Vietnam and entitled “Strengthening Intersectoral Collaboration against Child Abuse in Vietnam” was a major event attended by a large number of relevant Departments, including the Supreme People’s Court. To follow up on this, CRI at the request of UNICEF hosted a week-long visit to Melbourne of a party of judges and senior officials, led by the then Deputy Chief Justice of the Supreme People’s Court of Vietnam and the then Vice Minister for Justice. In February 2014, The Hon. Alastair Nicholson and Judge Peter Cozens, the then President of the Children’s Court of Victoria, travelled to Hanoi and were speakers at a 2-day seminar in Hai Phong on “The history of specialist courts for children”. In 2015, the Vietnamese National Assembly passed legislation setting up Family and Children’s Courts.

Following my retirement from RCH in January 2012, Alastair Nicholson invited me to join the board of Children’s Rights International, which he chairs. Since 2006, CRI has been working in Cambodia, where children are largely unprotected from both physical and sexual abuse and are at great risk from traffickers. Juvenile offenders are tried in adult courts, sent to jail and locked up with adult criminals.

The board of CRI is currently made up of The Hon. Alastair Nicholson (chair), The Hon. Paul Guest QC, The Hon. Jennifer Coate AO, Ms Sally Nicholes, Ms Margaret Harrison and Mr John Mann (lawyers), Dr Judith Slocombe AM (a veterinarian), Mr Ben Melin (Chartered Accountant) and me. Its long-term mission was to convince the Cambodian government, not known for its regard for human rights, of the desirability of having fewer children locked up and of the urgent need to set up family and children’s courts.

To this end, CRI has since 2006 conducted extensive seminars in Cambodia for a range of participants (law enforcement officials including judges) assisted by the Cambodian Minister for Justice and the President of the Court of Appeal and other senior members of the justice system in Cambodia.

After ten years, in July 2016, the Cambodian Legislature adopted a new Juvenile Justice Law incorporating many modern Australian and New Zealand concepts. CRI was then engaged by UNICEF and Plan International to prepare a strategic plan for the implementation of the juvenile justice law and this was formally launched in December 2018.

CRI, an organisation totally made up of volunteers, has achieved these remarkable outcomes with very little funding and very low overheads. Alastair Nicholson himself has been the main driver of the whole project and I cannot claim to have made any great contribution, at least, not in Cambodia. An application for DRG status that would make donations tax deductible is being prepared and if successful, it will be a game-changer. In addition, CRI would welcome anyone wishing to become a “Friend of CRI” to contact a member of the board.



# Serendipity

John G Rogers

*Serendipity: 'the occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way'*

For many, the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami is a distant memory. For those who suffered, the tragedy still looms large. For our family, this day was one of a lucky escape.

For a few years I organised a group of eight friends to explore Asia. In December 2004 I had a week before planned a trip to Vietnam.

My son Ben and his partner Danielle were having a break and I knew they would be in Sri Lanka, where I also had a 90 year-old friend whom I wanted to visit. I wondered if Ben and Danielle would like to catch up. Ben expressed surprise that I wanted to add more travel, but said that they would be pleased to see me.

It was just before Christmas and clearing passport control and Customs in Colombo, with only one official to process passengers from three Jumbo jets, was a nightmare that started at 10.30 PM in a hot terminal, with no seats no drinks, and no air conditioning. It took three hours for me to complete these formalities and then find the car and driver I had booked. I wondered why I had chosen to come.

My driver fell asleep several times on the way to the east coast, and we hit a giant hedgehog on the verge of the road. When I finally arrived at my hotel on the east coast, the night clerk came, asked me my name, said they were expecting me and sent the taxi away. When I got to the desk he asked my name again, then handed me a



message. Our booking had been stuffed up. The message gave the name of another hotel where I would find Ben and

Danielle. At 4 AM, however, the night manager said that he could not get a taxi until 7 AM but he invited me to sit in their hot, mosquito-ridden hall to wait. A quick tantrum soon solved that problem. At 5 AM I got into bed in the new hotel.

I added this experience to the many joys that travel throws up.

We left the east coast on Christmas Day for Christmas lunch and to stay with my friend in Colombo. Just before I left, I sent a couple of postcards home.

On Boxing Day, I took my usual walk to Colpetty Market (Kollupitiya), had a drink there, and hailed a tuk-tuk to get home. The driver asked a ridiculous price. I began to bargain. He said "Get in. I want to tell you what has happened, I will not charge you. There has been a great disaster". He told me about the tsunami that struck the east coast with a large loss of life and extreme damage.

The only reason that Ben and Danielle were not staying in a wooden beach front shack in a resort on the east coast, where all the staff and many guests perished, was that



Insects as sustenance in Vietnam

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they had chosen to come across to Colombo to be with me.

Serendipity. Curiously, this word, derived from Serendip, the former name of Sri Lanka before it became known as Ceylon, had just stepped into our lives.

The next day I went to visit the hotels in Colombo where the ballrooms provided emergency accommodation. The overwhelming sense of panic, grief and loss was palpable with people standing around weeping and speechless. Some told remarkable tales of survival. Many were injured, and many had lost partners, and/or children, family members, and all documentation. Despite my experience in grief and crisis counselling, I found myself unable to really engage with anyone, as I was too overwhelmed by our family's lucky escape.

Ben and Danielle, who had recently completed their internship at the Alfred Hospital, volunteered to go to the east coast to assist. In the confusion that existed they were not able to get there, so they evacuated on a free Qantas flight to Singapore.

I stayed a couple more days with my wise old friend and then headed to Singapore where I was to meet up with our group at the airport. While happy to be together with them, I remained acutely traumatised, and found it difficult to engage for days.

My postcards arrived 12 months later, after the mail had been retrieved from an overturned train that featured in many newspapers and was much photographed.

I worked for many years as a staff member of Elisabeth Kubler Ross in her Life Death and Transition Workshops. She was a famous Swiss psychiatrist who worked in the USA in the field of thanatology (the scientific study of death and the losses brought about as a result). Elisabeth ran workshops around the world and gave many public lectures.

Elisabeth believed that we all have 'Spirit Guides' that can keep us safe. I thought after this experience that she may be right.

It was after my arrival in Vietnam that I took the photos shown in this story!





# RCH last century

Janet Fitzpatrick (RCH 1961—1972)

After a serious year at RMH I decided paediatrics may be preferable. In 1961 I started work at the “old” hospital in Pelham Street Carlton. Some of the hospital buildings are still visible; on the North East corner of Pelham & Drummond Street the red brick building is now fashionable apartments. Previously it was medical wards & that was where I started with Dr Stanley Williams, an entertaining consultant.

There is another building recognisable at 151 Rathdowne Street. It is three stories & the male residents lived on the third floor. A couple of common rooms provided space for some lively parties. An American registrar often led the music with “Those old cotton fields back home”.

The women had their own quarters, again a three storey red brick structure, but in the centre of the scattered hospital buildings. There were only about eight of us and we were thoroughly spoilt by Mrs McCrory. She believed we worked VERY hard and would bring tea & hot buttered toast for breakfast.

Casualty was a small area with large burgundy coloured floor tiles. It was common to do a myringotomy for a bulging ear drum [something I hated]. At night if there was a urine or CSF to be examined we went to the lab to do it ourselves. No microbiologist on call then!

My second term was spent at the Orthopaedic unit at Mt Eliza. Children who had suffered polio, scoliosis or other spinal problems were treated there. Most were in a hip spica or full spinal plaster, and spent several months at Mt Eliza.

The ward was a long open balcony looking towards the sea.

The registrar [P Curwen Walker] & I had our own separate quarters & dining room. We ate there in style, sometimes joined by Dr Davies, the Medical Director. On Tuesday or Wednesday the Orthopaedic Specialists came to review their patients & operate or change plasters – Eric Price, Peter Williams & Bill Doig.

The RCH Ski Club was first formed at the old hospital and to raise funds for it. Sisters Jeanette Pollock & Kate Harden organised a stall in outpatients where there was a long hall with wooden benches down the middle. As a foundation member my family & I enjoyed lots of skiing & work parties with RCH friends [Cass, Lane, Williams & even Dr Colebatch-I don't think he skied but he came to some work parties.]

When we moved to the “new” hospital in Parkville in 1963 there was great excitement. At the time I happened to be the admitting officer, so I like to say that I admitted the first patient, although not the one for whom the queen cut the ribbon. As a registrar I enjoyed working in neonates, and general wards. From 1964 I changed to part time work in Clinic A. It was a section of emergency where we saw children who came to Emergency with a doctor's referral letter. We managed & reviewed them there & only referred them to outpatients when necessary [Other Clinic doctors were Una Shergold, Shirley May, Pam Triplett]. As well as that I did part time relieving in the Dermatology Clinic with Bob Kelly, and in the Staff Clinic. When I had my own young baby he or she would come to work with me for the first few months!

If I were busy the “pinkie” would happily look after the baby. What a luxury. I'm sure you could not do that now!!!

There was always a great sense of camaraderie at the old hospital; I hope it continues in the very beautiful and much more complex structure that is now RCH.

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Stanley Park, Vancouver, Canada  
Photo: Garry Warne





Untitled  
By: John Court

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# RCH Alumni

The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne  
50 Flemington Road  
Parkville Victoria 3052 Australia  
TELEPHONE +61 3 9345 5522  
www.rch.org.au/alumni



An invitation to a special lecture

## The impact of human activity on the health and well-being of Antarctica's wildlife

**Tue, 3 March, 12 PM**

RCH Foundation Boardroom, Level 2, 48 Flemington Road, Parkville  
Followed by lunch (optional - RSVP required) \$20 at 1 PM.

Human occupation of the Antarctica Continent commenced in February 1899 with the arrival of the Southern Cross Expedition at Cape Adare with 10 men and 75 sledge dogs.

Until that time, Antarctica and its fauna had been isolated physically and ecologically from the continents to the north.

Following this expedition, there was a steady stream of expeditions to locations around the Antarctic Continent followed by the establishment of research stations and most recently the arrival in large numbers of tourists.

There were many introductions of alien animals including dogs, horses and pigs and pet animals cats and cage birds.

Less well documented is the unintended introduction of agents of disease.

This talk will examine the increase in human activity in relation to the threats to and known impacts on the health of the Antarctic sea bird populations and note steps being taken internationally to minimise impacts.



Guest speaker:

**Dr Knowles Kerry AAM**  
Australian Antarctic  
Division (retired)

Knowles Kerry graduated in Melbourne University in 1962 and was then employed as a biochemist by Dr Charlotte Anderson in the Research Foundation of the RCH.

Over the next 5 years he investigated sugar malabsorption in infants with colleagues including Charlo Anderson, Rudge Townley and Michael Messer.

He gained his PhD in 1968 for this work. Shortly afterwards, he took up a Post Doctoral fellowship at the Institute for Biochemistry, University of Zurich.

Shortly before returning to Australia he worked again with Charlo who had at this time had just moved to the Birmingham Children's Hospital.

He made the academic transition to marine and terrestrial ecology in 1969 when he was recruited by the Australian Antarctic Division to winter on Macquarie Island in 1970.

On his return to Australia he was given the task of setting up the terrestrial biological research program and later the marine research program.

His own research focused on understanding the impact of the krill harvest and the species which depended on krill for food.

Knowles was also involved in International Antarctic Affairs including the coordination of International scientific programs and the negotiation of the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). He retired in 2006.



### Online

Transfer \$20 per person payment to: BSB: 063113 Acc: 10076105 Name: RCH Medical Alumni  
Email Honorary Secretary, RCH Alumni, Garry Warne - [garry@warnefamily.net](mailto:garry@warnefamily.net)



### Post

Attach \$20 per person payment by cheque payable to RCH Medical Alumni.  
Post to Prof Jim Wilkinson, Treasurer, RCH Alumni, Executive Suite, Royal Children's Hospital, Parkville VIC 3052.  
Please include a note with your name and who will be accompanying you.