

2021 PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

In the Annual Report for 2020 I noted "our State and Federal leaders are introducing us to the concept of Covid normal for 2021. What this means is as yet unclear." As I write the Report for 2021 Melburnians are slowly moving out of the 4th Covid 19 induced lockdown for this year and carefully entering the "living with Covid normal phase". Currently we hold the title of the most locked down city in the world having experienced a cumulative total of approximately nine months since March 2020.

Within this Covid19 environment the broad rhythm of life has continued to be overlaid with pandemic related changes, challenges, stresses and for many, ill health, deep distress and heartache. It would be naive to assume that Alumni have not been impacted by Covid19 induced demands.

By adapting to the prevailing circumstances the Executive Committee has endeavoured to facilitate its principle functions of communication, connection between members and engagement with the Hospital.

Six Committee Meetings have been held this year via zoom at two monthly intervals along with additional task focussed zooms, multiple phone calls and countless emails zipping between us.

While individual committee members hold principle oversight for specific activities, the Committee together have worked as a seamless and supportive team making for a productive and enjoyable year. On your behalf I would like to thank each person for their considerable commitment, creativity and adaptability.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2021

- Prof. Jim Wilkinson AM - Vice President, Treasurer, Member Data Base and Website Management.
- Dr Caroline Clarke – Secretary.
- Dr Kevin Collins - Vernon Collins Oration, Historical Society, RCH 150 Representative.
- Ms Bronwyn Hewitt - Curator of Alumni Archives and Aluminations 'Reflections' Series.
- Prof. Peter McDougall – retired*.
- Ms Christine Unsworth AM – 'Way Back When' podcast and Social Events Coordinator.
- Dr Garry Warne AM - Membership Administration, Editor of Aluminations, Children's Rights International.
- Ms Gigi Williams - Digital Support and Zoom Coordinator.

.....and myself as President.

**Due to a clash of commitments Peter retired from the Committee early in the year. We missed his insightful contributions and his company but continue to appreciate his ongoing support for the Alumni.*

Jim retires as Treasurer, Manager of the website and the member data base at this AGM, positions he has held since 2015. Over the last two years he has also been vice-president so, in total, making a pivotal contribution to the administration of the Association that is greatly appreciated by members and the Executive Committee and for which we all unreservedly thank him.

Caroline as incoming secretary quickly grasped the reins so ensuring that administration details and processes were attended to in a timely and appropriate manner.

MEMBERSHIP

It is exciting to note the steady increase in interstate and overseas members, possibly assisted by increased digital access to the Alumni activities of Aluminations on the web site and Alum-inars via zoom.

Currently membership stands at 215, up from 209 at the 2020 AGM. We welcomed 13 new members who are recorded in the appendix to this report. There are 84 non-paying members of whom 48 are over 80 years, 27 overseas and nine are widows of deceased Alumni.

As an Association we have the ongoing challenge of informing and engaging staff who are retiring or otherwise leaving RCH, MCRI, Victorian Clinical Genetics Service and the University of Melbourne Department of Paediatrics, about the Alumni and the process of application for membership. We have been in discussions with the MSA and the Allied Health Coordinator to address this.

During this year we have all been deeply moved with the passing of esteemed Alumni members each of whom have been valued colleagues and friends of many Alumni and leaders in their respective fields of paediatrics. Dr David McCredie AM, Dr Mary Morland, Dr Robert Birrell OAM, Dr John Court AM, Dr James A. Keipert and Professor Don Cameron. On our behalf Kevin Collins prepared thoughtful tributes that were published in The Age communicating our condolences.

In the General Division of the 2021 Australia Day Honours Dr Jim McGill was awarded an AM for significant service to metabolic medicine, to biochemical genetic pathology and to medical education.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Due to Covid19 isolation restrictions it was not possible to hold any face to face gatherings this year so the programme adapted to Zoom, overseen by Gigi Williams.

Alum-inars have been the zoom form of our traditional lunch time meetings providing an opportunity for interstate and overseas members also to participate. The initial numbers in attendance were higher than in-person gatherings but over time they settled to the usual range.

The Executive are considering whether to proceed with a combination of in-person and zoom meetings for 2022.

Alum-inars via zoom are recorded and are available for a time on the website. The presentations this year were varied, stimulating and most appreciated by all attendees.

In March, in keeping with the current increase in interest to understand infectious diseases that have had a major impact on people and society, Dr Ross Jones, Senior Research Fellow UoM took us on a fascinating journey 'Hunting Tuberculosis Through History: Disease in the Archives or Diseased Archives?'

We were brought into the present with a glimpse towards the future when in May, Professor Andrea O'Connor, Head of the Department of Biomedical Engineering UoM presented 'Engineering Tissues: Biomaterial Strategies to Prevent Infection and Promote Repair'.

In July Professor Martin Delatycki, Clinical Director of Victorian Clinical Genetics Services discussed new technologies that have, over the last ten years, brought genetic testing from testing single genes to whole genome sequencing so linking past practices to those currently available.

Our final Alum-inar for 2021 in September presented us with a different lens to view the world of paediatrics. Jane Tanner a prestigiously awarded author and illustrator of children's books described with sensitivity how, according to their developmental age and life experiences, children view illustrations, engage with them and attempt to gain an understanding of their world and their experiences.

We would like to thank each speaker for providing us with the opportunity to engage with their area of expertise and also for their careful presentations and their time.

The Gala Dinner held each November in association with the AGM was cancelled last year and sadly our expectation to hold it this year has not eventuated due to uncertainty surrounding Covid19 restrictions. Currently the outlook for a 2022 AGM and Dinner is positive and we have a November booking in place for the Kew Golf Club. Aluminations, with three publications since the 2020 AGM, has been an important communication during Covid 19 times, once again thoughtfully edited by Garry Warne. Everyone has appreciated the interesting range of contributions from members - articles, photos, art, reminiscences. At this time, we especially remember Jim Keipert who during this year took us on highly engaging journeys into the world of ants and also to ancient Rome.

The series of articles curated by Bronwyn Hewitt on the broad theme of 'Reflections' have been informative and fascinating as well as generating an important archival record.

Sometime ago members suggested important topics on the Turning Points theme and we would like to invite you to put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) to record these in future editions of Aluminations.

Aluminations continues to receive plaudits from the wide readership. It is available to RCH staff through the library. This year we are again indebted to Dan Warne for his time and expertise formatting Aluminations to such a high standard on our behalf. We warmly thank him.

The Website located on the RCH platform, provides an up-to-date window to our activities past, present and future as well as member news, profiles, recordings of Alum-inar presentations and editions of Aluminations. It is a readily available resource for members and the wider community.

Alumni Archives are a work in progress and are a permanent activity of the Association. Gems of information and experience are eagerly sort and most welcome.

The RCH Historical Society opened The Historical Room and Gallery during the year and we were invited to plan tours for members. This will be possible next year when we are able to return to RCH for our meetings.

The Vernon Collins Oration is a special event in both the RCH calendar and that of the Alumni. We are always appreciative of the support provided by the RCH Executive and Kevin Collins. The Oration for 2021 was delivered via zoom by Professor Lyn Gillam AM, Academic Director of the Children's Bioethics Centre at The Royal Children's Hospital. She spoke to 'The Ethical Life of the Hospital' stating "Ethical principles are not just concepts that we learn about – but what we care about".

RCH 150 Anniversary project of the Alumni Association was the Turning Points podcast generously funded by the RCH Foundation. It drew on archival material of the early days of the Hospital including an audio interview with Dr Howard Williams and some current Alumni members with Christine Unsworth as anchor person. The access link to this engaging review is available on our website.

The University of Melbourne Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences marked the RCH 150 anniversary with a recently launched publication to which some members of the Alumni were invited to contribute. There will be an accompanying exhibition in the Brownless Biomedical Library opening at the end of November 2021.

Children's Rights International together with the Alumni, each year co-host a medico-legal seminar to explore current issues important to the wellbeing of children. The 2020 zoom meeting 'Indigenous Child Health, Children's Rights and the Law' scheduled for August was transferred to November to meet administrative requirements. Similarly, the 2021 Seminar has been postponed to 2022.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HOSPITAL

Alumni value the strong relationship with RCH that we experience in multiple ways.

John Stanway (recently retired CEO) and Matt Sabin (CMO) along with many people and departments have continuously supported Alumni connections with the Hospital. We feel welcomed and valued members of the RCH community and enjoy participating in Grand Rounds, Historical Society, Vernon Collins Oration, Medical Staff Association (for medical members), having access to the library and receiving support from Creative Studios for our website. Stethoscope, the Hospital staff newsletter, is forwarded to us online. When we are able to return to the campus, parking discounts will be available to members when attending Alumni functions.

As noted previously, we value the support afforded us by the RCH Foundation and look forward to returning to their Meeting Rooms in 2022.

FUTURE PLANNING

Chairing this Meeting is my final activity as President of the Alumni Association and I would like to thank the Alumni for the honour of serving the Association in this role.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the two-year term of office has unfolded in a manner totally beyond my imagination. As some of the Executive can testify, I was somewhat anxious being the first allied health person to be President and only the second woman, Dr Mary Dwyer being President in 2013.

(As an aside the Alumni Association was established in 1988, with Dr Norman Wettenhall the first President and Mr Nate Myers as Honorary Secretary).

My fears were unfounded. The Committee and Alumni members were, and remained, most welcoming and supportive. It has been a rich and rewarding experience for me, especially connecting in greater depth with the current RCH world and also having the opportunity to engage with people who were once colleagues and now, without the busy demands of the working environment, have become treasured friends.

As we move into a post Covid-19 world we are looking forward to once again meeting in person and continuing with our other activities, all supported by a strong Committee and efficient management systems.

Member Deaths and New Members, November 2020- November 2021

Deaths

Dr David McCredie AM	17/11/20
Dr Mary Morland (married name Parkin)	15/01/21
Dr Robert Birrell OAM	23/06/21
Dr John Court AM	02/07/21
Dr James A Keipert	08/10/21
Prof Don Cameron	16/10/21

New Members

- Dr Amit Saha FRCPCH FRACP Locum Consultant at RCH, 2020, Paediatrician and Paediatric Gastroenterologist, Perth
- Dr Tom Lee MB BS FRACP FASCIA Trained at RCH in 1970s. Paediatrician and Allergist, Dandenong Hospital.
- Dr Betty But MB BS DCH FHKCPaed FHKAM MHA FRCP(Edin) FRCPCH Fellow Dept of Endocrinology and Diabetes 1993, Visiting Consultant in Metabolic Medicine RCH 2016. Paediatric Endocrinologist, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Kowloon, Hong Kong
- Prof Shamy De Silva MB BS MD DCH Fellow in the Department of Endocrinology and Diabetes in 1999/2000. Professor in the University of Colombo Paediatric Endocrinologist Lady Ridgeway Children's Hospital Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Prof Jithangi Wanigasinghe MD DCH MPhil Fellow in Neurology 2006, Senior neurologist at Lady Ridgeway Children's Hospital Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Dr Orla Neylon MBBch (NUI) FFPAED MD Fellow Endocrinology and Diabetes & Fellow MCRI 2010 – 2013 Consultant Paediatrician and Endocrinologist, UL Hospital Group, Ireland
- A/Prof James Lucas AM BSc BSc MDsc FRACDS Deputy Director RCH Dept Dental Surgery 1984 – 2018

- Dr Clarissa Carvalho Pedreira. Fellow in Endocrinology from Brazil 2002-2004. Currently working for PhD in Boston.
- Prof Johann Deutsch. Research Fellow and clinical assistant at RCH 1980 / 81 Paediatric Gastroenterologist and Hepatologist, Graz, Austria
- Prof Jenny Couper MB ChB MD FRACP Fellow in endocrinology 1984–1986. Paediatric Endocrinologist at RCH 1990–1991. Professor of Paediatrics Adelaide.
- Mrs Leanne Hallowell Dip T (EC) Bed (EC) PGrdDip (Ed Stds) GDip (Admin Child and Family Programs) Med (Melb). Head of Play Therapy.
- Dr Suzanne Long B Physio (Hons) PhD Physiotherapy team leader 2004 – 2009. Physiotherapist PICU 2005 – 2009. Research Officer, Heart Research Group MCRI 2011 – 2014
- Mrs Jan Birrell. Widow of Dr Robert Birrell OAM

Resignations

Dr Ian Robertson

Ruth Wraith OAM

President 2019 - 2021