

TRANSPLANT TALK



ISSUE 1.

2018

Hawkesbury Canoe Classic (HCC) raises \$140,000!



Vincent's Hospital, Sydney; Arrow/HCC PhD Scholarship recipients and new medical research projects.

The 111km overnight paddle has raised almost \$4 million since its association with Arrow began in 1994, and continues to fund vital medical research thanks to the commitment of HCC paddlers, land crew, committee members and volunteers

involved in the annual event.

It's time to start training as an individual or a team for the 42nd Classic (111 km) or 3rd Wisemans Dash (65 km). We encourage corporate teams to take part in the challenge so please contact Arrow at info@arrow.org.au if your company is interested in getting involved this year.

The 41st Classic held in October last year raised a huge \$140,000 to fund medical research. Funds raised will allow Arrow to continue its funding of a research scientist at the Blood Stem Cell and Cancer Research Unit at St

Donations in memoriam

We gratefully acknowledge donations received in memory of:

- Katherine Robertson

HCC welcomes new President, Claire Shanahan

Kent Heazlett stood down as HCC President at the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic AGM on 15 February 2018 after 17 years of service. Claire Shanahan was elected President, Doug Rosser was elected Honorary Treasurer and Joy Carter as Honorary Secretary.

Arrow Chairman Mark O'Hara shares his heartfelt gratitude in this personal note of thanks to Kent:

"I would like to congratulate you on your stewardship of this amazing annual event over the last 17 years. The fact that it has challenged thousands of people and raised millions of dollars

can be directly related to you and your leadership of the hardworking committee. My first encounters with you were at the time when my good mate Greg Neate was battling leukaemia and you visited him in hospital. You also attended Greg's funeral after he lost that battle.

My first experience paddling down the Hawkesbury was in 1999 so my involvement spans your presidency. Two of the things I look forward to most each year is catching up with you and your family at the start, and then meeting you along the river and hearing you chat with one and

all as you paddle. Your enthusiasm is infectious. One of the highlights in all the years that I have paddled was certainly the year we paddled together in my Mirage 730.

I know that Claire and the newly elected Committee will continue to do an amazing job of organising the event and carrying on the wonderful tradition of the HCC, but the legacy you have created over the last 17 years will make that task easier.

Thank you Kent and wish you luck this year as you prepare for HCC 25."

We thank Kent for his tremendous commitment and contribution to medical research and patient support.

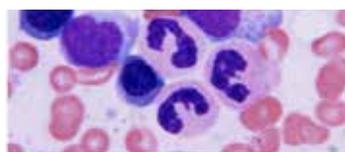
Events

- Hawkesbury Canoe Classic (HCC) Saturday 27th – Sunday 28th October 2018 www.canoeclassic.net
- Arrow AGM – Friday 16th November 2018

Arrow grant helps in developing new therapies and diagnostic tests

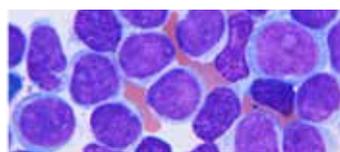
Written by Dr. Tim Molloy (senior researcher)

The Blood, Stem Cell, and Cancer Research (BSSCR) laboratory is a multidisciplinary research group consisting of clinicians, postdoctoral scientists, and students situated within the Department of Haematology and Bone Marrow Transplantation of St Vincent's Hospital. Arrow has generously been supporting some of our key research lines for many years. One of these is centred around optimising bone marrow transplantation for the treatment of Acute Myeloid Leukaemia (AML), in which we are aiming to develop new diagnostic tests to guide transplant timing and also couple it with novel complementary therapeutic strategies.



Normal bone marrow

by the accumulation of specific mutations in one or more 'stem' cells that make up the haematopoietic system. These then give rise to huge numbers of daughter 'myeloid' cells in an uncontrolled manner which accumulate in the blood and bone marrow, eventually crowding out important healthy cells such as white and red cells. This leads to various serious symptoms in affected individuals, and for



Bone marrow with acute leukaemia

having both higher incidence and mortality, so given Australia's ageing population AML's already significant health and economic burden is predicted to only increase in future.

What is interesting, however, is that while overall outcomes are generally poor for many patients, AML is actually quite a clinically heterogenous disease – while some patients will unfortunately

experience relapse despite quite aggressive therapy, others have an excellent response to treatment leading to lasting remission and cure. This is important because despite this large variation in patient response to treatment, therapy for almost all AML patients has remained largely unchanged over the last four decades. We therefore have a major research focus on developing new diagnostic tests and treatment strategies for this disease, so we can better tailor treatments for individual patients with the hope of eventually significantly increasing the cure rate.

Around five years ago, Arrow provided some seed funding to support a new postdoctoral scientist and some key equipment for our lab. This donation allowed us to pursue a new pilot research project into AML that aimed to compare the DNA of patients who responded well to therapy to those that didn't. This work led to the identification of a gene called "microRNA-10a", which appeared to be switched on specifically in the leukaemic cells of patients who responded poorly to therapy.

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MEDICAL RESEARCH

Compared to normal healthy bone marrow, we found it to be at levels at least 80-fold higher in these poor prognosis patients which led us to hypothesize that it may be important for the biology of these leukaemic cells. Our findings attracted the interest of members of one of Europe's largest leukaemia clinical trials groups, the Study Alliance Leukaemia (SAL), who were able to provide a valuable set of AML specimens from patients enrolled into one of their large trials that wanted to determine the optimal timing of bone marrow transplantation during treatment.

We hypothesized that by measuring microRNA-10a we could identify at diagnosis which patients were likely to be high-risk and should therefore receive more aggressive treatment, including early bone marrow transplantation, rather than waiting until later in their treatment as is normally done. The key finding of our study was that in the patient samples we analysed, those that were low in microRNA-10a strongly benefitted from early bone marrow transplantation - in fact these patients had a 90% survival rate compared to less than 30% of those with high microRNA-10a.

This early data therefore suggests that microRNA-10a could form the basis of a valuable clinical test able to inform a clinician about the optimal timing of bone marrow transplantation, and we are currently further validating these

important findings with additional patient samples. Seed funding for this project from Arrow was vital to get it to where it is today, and our team and collaborators are extremely grateful for their continuing support.

Researchers: Thanh Vu, Kristy Wang, Helen Tao, Tim Molloy, and David Ma.

*Department of Haematology, and Blood, Stem Cell and Cancer Research Program
St Vincent's Hospital Center for Applied Medical Research
St Vincent's Hospital Sydney*

Clinical trial gives new hope to patients without matched donors

In 2016, Arrow provided a grant of \$100,000 to a clinical trial offering hope to transplant patients without a matched donor.

The trial started with patients at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney and has now grown to include three more hospitals with one more expected to join in 2018.

The trial has the ability to provide the 20% of patients who couldn't previously obtain a stem cell transplant with a donor. It is an exciting development in the treatment of leukaemia and gives a chance of cure for those patients who previously had little hope. The trial will continue in 2018.



Arrow nursing scholarship provides insight into 60 years of transplant

Annabel Horne, Bone Marrow Transplant Coordinator at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, was awarded the Sylvia Hartog Nursing Scholarship for the opportunity to attend the EBMT nurses meeting in Manchester UK in October 2017. The theme was 60 years of transplant.

Modern day bone marrow transplants began with the pioneering work of E. Donnall Thomas in Seattle. Annabel

presented meeting outcomes at Arrow's Annual General Meeting in November, sharing unique insights into the treatment paradigm for Acute Myeloid Leukaemia (AML), new drug approvals for haematological malignancies, AML transplant activity today and Graft Versus Host Disease (GVHD) prophylaxis and treatment. The presentation also covered alternative donor sources including cord blood, haploidentical and mismatched donors.

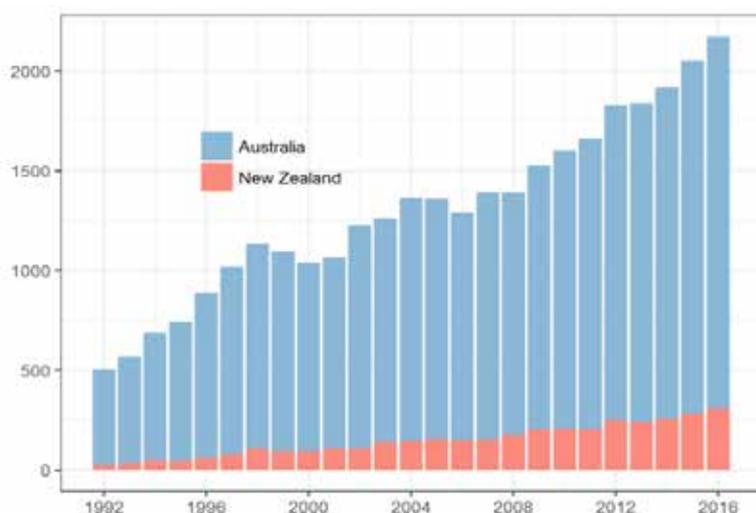
In an email from the UK Annabel wrote: I am really enjoying the European BMT nurses meeting here in Manchester. Some interesting talks yesterday about transplant in AML and management of side effects such as fungal infections and veno-occlusive disease. Today is all about research methods and analysing results. Thanks so much to Arrow for the opportunity to attend this meeting. It has been beneficial meeting colleagues from the UK and Europe.

ABMTRR releases 25 years of Registry data

This year the Australasian Bone Marrow Transplant Recipient Registry (ABMTRR) marks 25 years and has included an extra section in its Annual Data Summary showing transplant trends from 1992 to 2016. There were 2,174 registered transplants in Australia and New Zealand in 2016; and the report shows that transplant numbers continue to increase, in particular the number of autologous transplants

for myeloma and allogeneic transplants for acute myeloid leukaemia.

Improvements in the safety of the transplant procedure have enabled older patients to be offered this treatment, with around 40% of transplant recipients in 2016 aged 60 years and over - very few of these would have been considered suitable for a transplant in the early 1990s.





Meet Kent Heazlett

Kent Heazlett. Photo by Abbey Digital

Being a small charity that receives no government funding, Arrow relies on its supporters to achieve better outcomes for bone marrow transplant patients.

We are pleased to introduce a series of interviews with Arrow supporters – starting with Kent Heazlett who became president of the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic (HCC) Association in 2000, and was involved with the Race Committee prior to that.

How did you get involved with the HCC?

I sent the organisers a congratulatory message telling them what a fantastic job they and all the volunteers did. They then called me and invited me to come along to the next Race Committee meeting. As they say in the classics: the rest is history.

The event is run by a very small, but absolutely dedicated, group of volunteers who give selflessly of their time throughout the year in preparation for the Classic. We have been extremely fortunate to have such talented individuals in pivotal positions on the Race Committee. They are, in turn, supported by wonderful committee members.

When was your first HCC paddle and what was it like?

My first paddle in the Classic was back in 1991. It was a pretty daunting experience, even though I paddled with a good mate of mine, John Kelly. I can still remember the feeling of trepidation, firstly setting off at the start at Windsor and then more so upon leaving the major checkpoint at Wiseman's Ferry into the dark having completed 65km but knowing that we had a further 46km to go to the finish. The sight of the road bridge at Brooklyn is a glorious thing after being on the river for 13 hours!!

How many times have you finished the 111km overnight paddle from Windsor to Brooklyn?

I have started the event 25 times, and successfully completed it 24 times. The one time I didn't finish, I attempted to paddle an old "clubbie" surf ski that was made for a paddler much taller than me. The result was that I was stretching forward to be able to steer the craft, a lot different from the armchair comfort of my old TK1 and TK2 kayaks. I'm looking forward to achieving my 25th "finish" in 2018.

How did you get hooked?

John and I had done a little bit of downriver, white-water paddling and, as John was turning 40, we were looking for a challenge and the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic was

suggested as "filling that bill". John and I were training for the Classic the following year when he broke his collarbone after being crash-tackled by one of his sons. I then paddled solo for a number of years, but he has made a come-back. I did hitch a ride in the back of Arrow Chairman, Mark O'Hara's Mirage 730 double, on one occasion. Thankfully Mark's strength got us home.

What drives you to keep paddling?

Paddling is a perfect recreation and a great competitive sport. Basically anyone can learn to paddle. To be honest I don't do a hell of a lot of paddling outside preparation for the Classic each year. I certainly have been guilty on a number of occasions of being "underdone" as far as being "race-ready". The timing of the Classic works well for me as far as my overall fitness regime is concerned. The late October date allows you to have a rest from training over the November, December, January period, and then to gradually get into it in the lead-up to each year's Classic. In September, we usually take part in the Myall Classic over the 47km distance which gives a good guide as to how your training is going. Most of my fitness training revolves around the gym and the golf course.

What advice would you give first time HCC paddlers?

The best advice for first time paddlers in the Classic is to seek out experienced Classic paddlers and learn from their mistakes. I can still remember the huge amount of gear that we carried on our first Classic. Today we probably carry a third of what we did that first time.

Why should more paddlers take on the challenge?

The challenge of the Classic is twofold. Sure, it is a big physical effort but more than that it is a mental challenge to overcome what your body tells you and to keep going in the knowledge that a lot of people are relying on you to get to the finish. All those people who have donated to your fundraising want to see you finish. Also, your land-crew stays up most of the night and they will tell you that land-crewing is as tough as paddling. Having never land-crewed I wouldn't dispute that claim – especially if I want to be fed at home as my wife, Robyn and daughter, Skye are my land-crew! Obviously the more paddlers we have, the more money we raise, and that is the reason we conduct the event each year.

To sponsor a paddler or get involved visit: www.canoeclassic.net

The Dave 'Coke' Wards Memorial does it again

Fundraising is fun, but the challenge is in maintaining momentum. The annual Dave 'Coke' Wards Memorial held in October each year is Arrow's longest standing supporter, having raised funds for medical research and

patient support since 1992. The surfing contest raised \$1500 for Arrow through last year's event, and we thank Wayne King, Chris Beeby and the surfers that keep the event running.



Wayne King

