

CEO Report

Welcome to the first edition of Arrow's *Transplant Talk* for 2022.

It has been a busy few months at Arrow as we have embarked on a number of internal changes including the recruitment of five new directors, the adoption of a revised constitution, and the relocation of our office.

With these changes come opportunities and we look forward to sharing with you the direction of the new Arrow board in the coming months.

In this edition of *Transplant Talk* we catch up with previous nurse and PhD scholarship recipients to find out where they are now. It is so pleasing and

rewarding to hear how they have each flourished in their careers thanks to the support of Arrow.

As always we welcome your feedback and it was great to hear from a number of our supporters following our last newsletter. The article on Professor Kerry Atkinson in particular sparked much interest, with many supporters recalling their experiences in being treated by Professor Atkinson in years gone by. Belinda says it was a joy to read; Catherine says she loved seeing this; and Greg also says it was good to see; as they reflected on their own and family member transplants conducted in the 1980s.



Richelle Koller, Arrow CEO

We love hearing from you so please feel free to drop us a note anytime on any of the articles you read including suggestions for future editions of *Transplant Talk*.

Leukathon

Meet Luke Chapman, or Chappo, as he is better known by his mates. Luke had his life turned upside down in 2020 when he was diagnosed with leukaemia, going from diagnosis to treatment in just a matter of days.

Being thrust into a new world of leukaemia, as well as a physical move from one side of the world to the other with a relocation from England back home to Australia for treatment, things moved quickly for Luke.

Fortunately Luke's sister was a match as a stem cell transplant donor enabling Luke to receive a life saving transplant to fight the disease. Two years on, Luke is doing well recovering from his treatment while continuing to manage the side effects. Having had his eyes opened up to the realities of those faced by living with blood cancers, Luke and his mates from around the world, created the "Leukathon", a global effort to bring much needed awareness and fundraising to support leukaemia and blood cancer patients.

This year the Leukathon included a group swimming and cycling event from London to Paris. A gruelling adventure that Luke this year was able to participate in, the Leukathon provided those involved with the opportunity to experience a bit of pain in solidarity for those who don't get to choose.

Raising an astounding \$106,864 in donations from Luke's united force of family and friends, the Leukathon



Luke Chapman

team generously chose to donate its hard earned funds to Arrow's medical research programs and have made a three year commitment to continue its support.

Specifically, the funding will be used to support the second phase of an important medical research program being undertaken by Luke's treating doctor Dr John Moore and his team from the Haematology Department in St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney.

The research focusses on improving the success of haploidentical allogeneic stem cell transplants, being those transplants where a sibling or matched unrelated donor does not exist for the patient. Haploidentical donors share a "half" HLA match with their family

members and with further research could provide a successful treatment option for the 70% of patients per year who require a stem cell transplant but do not have a sibling match.

The first phase of this project was funded by Arrow in 2015 and saw encouraging results and improvements in survival rates for haploidentical transplant patients. Moving into the second phase of the project the trial seeks to evaluate the safety and efficacy of changes to the drug regime based on the data obtained to further improve patient outcomes.

Though Luke was fortunate to have a stem cell match with his sister, Luke appreciates that this is not always the case for everyone and is passionate

Announcements

- **New board members**
Congratulations and welcome to our new Arrow board members appointed at the 2021 Annual General Meeting:

David Maywald
Kim Mouret
Christopher Murray
Stuart Snell
Roberto Trincherio

Read more on each of the directors at our website www.arrow.org.au/about-us/#board-of-directors

- **Annual Report 2021**
We are excited to present our Annual Report for the 2021 financial year. Find a copy on our website www.arrow.org.au/about-us/#annual-report

- **New contact details**
We have moved! Please note our new contact details including telephone number and address for mailing: 148 / 20-40 Meagher Street Chippendale NSW 2008 02 8398 8149

- **Farewell Sue Hudson**
Congratulations and thank you to our Program and Scholarships Coordinator Sue Hudson who has retired late last year. Wishing you all the best for your retirement Sue!



Sue Hudson

in supporting this important medical research.

Luke is also a strong advocate for blood and stem cell donations and encourages everyone to donate where they can to expand the unrelated donor pool and provide more patients with a fighting chance.

The Leukathon's outstanding commitment to improving the lives of those with blood cancers is commended and we thank Luke Chapman and his team wholeheartedly for their support of Arrow and transplant medical research.



MAKE A DONATION TODAY!

VISIT WWW.ARROW.ORG.AU

OR COMPLETE THE FORM OVERLEAF

PATIENT SUPPORT



Kylie with twin daughters Sophie and Hailey

Sophie and Hailey are identical twins and the best of friends. Both diagnosed with an inherited immune deficiency at three years of age, the girls have faced significant health challenges throughout their nine years of life.

The biggest challenge of all has been their recent separation from each other whilst each undergoing a bone marrow transplant in order to cure their diagnosed chronic granulomatous disorder and improve their quality of life.

Their parents, Kylie and Andrew, weighed up the options when deciding how to approach this

life-saving treatment for their girls. They decided to have both transplants done at the same time to minimise the risk of one child bringing home an infection from school, and to support the mental health of the girls knowing how difficult it would be for one sister to see the other going through treatment and not being able to do the things that she could do.

During hospitalisation Kylie and Andrew were able to see each other and visit each of the girls in their separate rooms within the hospital. However the girls were unable to see one another until they had fully recovered from the transplant and

Sophie and Hailey

their neutrophils were high enough. This proved a tough time for the normally inseparable twins. Kylie says

“For kids that have always been together this was hard and at times heart breaking. We tried to video call each other every day so the girls could see each other but it wasn’t as good as them being in the same room together.”

Separation from the family’s wider support network also proved mentally challenging as the difficult decision was made to relocate from the family’s regional home town in Queensland to be closer to the Children’s Hospital in Brisbane. The girls enrolled in distance education enabling them to maintain their schooling but missed the social interaction with their friends. Kylie says,

“They have no friends here. All they have is each other. Everyday they miss their friends and wish they could see them.”

In addition to the challenges faced

whilst being isolated and in hospital, Kylie and Andrew also had financial pressures to contend with. Taking trips to the hospital every week, and with both parents unable to work, the cost of parking, medication and nutritional supplements added up very quickly. Arrow helped alleviate some of this pressure by providing the family with financial assistance through our patient support program.

IGA grocery cards and petrol cards were donated to Sophie and Hailey’s family by Arrow to help cover the cost of essential household items and ensure the family was able to put healthy home-made meals on the table.

Kylie described the assistance as life saving. “Thank you; your generosity is not helping my family but many other families. Without the sponsorship of IGA, Arrow wouldn’t be able to help families as much as they can now,” said Kylie.

We wish Sophie and Hailey a speedy recovery and a cherished reunion back home.

RESEARCH



Dr Alexander Martyn, Queensland University of Technology

Ageing Research Program

While driven by a passion for research, life for a PhD student can often mean living on a shoestring budget which can be tough. That is why PhD student Alexander Martyn was ecstatic to hear in 2014 that he was the successful recipient of an Arrow Hawkesbury Canoe Classic PhD scholarship.

Looking back on it now Alexander says: “I don’t think I would be where I am today without it. Essentially, the scholarship was enough to let me live comfortably during my PhD studies. I didn’t have to take up extra weekend work to pay rent. I was able to go to the lab and knuckle out this research”.

And that is just what Alexander did. In 2020 Alexander published a paper with the results of his research into Minimal Residual Disease (MRD). MRD is the left-over cancer cells that can exist in a patient after treatment and that can often lead to cancer recurrence. To counter MRD, Alexander designed and synthesised two hybrid molecules that can be used as a pharmacological probe to investigate the drug resistance mechanisms that lead to MRD.

Since then Alexander has relocated to Brisbane joining the Queensland University of Technology in a super group called the Cancer and Ageing Research Program (CARP). The CARP program aims to discover mechanisms to treat all age-related illnesses and cancers — extending upon Alexander’s previous works.

In 2019 Alexander was awarded a Queensland government fellowship grant and now supervises a number of new students of his own, providing him with the extra responsibility of spreading his knowledge to his students which is something he loves to do. We will continue to keenly follow the work of Alexander and his team and wish them all the best in making new discoveries into the treatment of cancer.

ARROW RECEIVES NO GOVERNMENT FUNDING



CAR-T Cell Therapy

In 2019 Dr Michael Papadimitriou was awarded his PhD from the University of Sydney for his research into the use of dendritic cells to elicit an anti cancer immune response against certain blood cancers.

This research was made possible thanks to the Arrow Hawkesbury Canoe Classic scholarship which supported Michael during his PhD studies between 2014 and 2016.

Today Michael lives in Germany where he is working for a pharmaceutical company that specialises in cell and gene

therapies for oncology patients. In his role as the Global Medical Affairs Manager for Miltenyi Biomedicine, Michael is currently working on a Chimeric Antigen Recepto, otherwise known as CAR-T cell therapy, as an investigational cancer therapy to treat hematological malignancies.

This is an exciting area of research which has created a lot of interest in the medical community and is an exciting opportunity for patients.

CAR-T cell therapy is an immune therapy that uses the ability of the T cells to attack cells with a

specific receptor designed to find cancer cells. There are multiple CAR-T cell therapies approved around the world.

For Michael and his team their work is up to clinical trial stage and they have currently enrolled patients into their pivotal clinical trials in nine European countries and across the United States of America.

Michael credits his PhD scholarship for getting him where he is today saying:

“My PhD research, combined with my desire to improve the lives of cancer patients, has made me the professional that I am today. My PhD would not have been



Dr Michael Papadimitriou

possible without the support from my Arrow Hawkesbury Canoe Classic PhD scholarship and for that I am very grateful. Thank you.”

NURSE EDUCATION

Nursing Scholarship Updates

We are pleased to announce that Erin Johnson and Caitlin Mulcahy – 2020 recipients of the Professor Geoffrey Driscoll Nursing Scholarship – have done amazingly well with their studies and in furthering their career goals in nursing.

Both nurses were awarded an Arrow scholarship for the completion of studies in Chemotherapy and other Systemic Treatments in Cancer Care, as well as Blood and Marrow Transplantation through the Australian College of Nursing.

Erin Johnson from the University

Hospital Geelong, completed both subjects with distinction and has gone on to become a Myeloma Nurse Consultant. Erin hopes to commence studying to be a Nurse Practitioner in 2023. Erin says she has a lot to be grateful for.

Caitlin Mulcahy from Westmead Hospital has also proudly received distinctions in each of the two subjects she received a scholarship for and is now onto her final subject of the Graduate Certificate in Cancer Nursing.

Caitlin shared with us that she is hoping to become a Clinical Nurse



Erin Johnson



Caitlin Mulcahy

Specialist within the next year and is extremely grateful for all the support the Arrow Bone Marrow Transplant Foundation has provided to her. Congratulations to both these inspiring and talented nurses; keep up the great work!



Susan Hall

Susan Hall is a registered nurse from the haematology and bone marrow transplant ward at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, and the latest recipient of the Arrow Trace Richey Masters Scholarship.

Masters of Cancer and Haematology Nursing

With five years specialised experience in bone marrow transplant care, Susan has the opportunity to meet most of the transplant patients within the bone marrow transplant (BMT) ward. Susan is responsible for all aspects of nursing care for transplant patients including administering chemotherapy and bone marrow transplants in addition to helping with all of a patient's care needs during their stay. Susan knows how important nurses are to a patient's care saying:

“To me, nurses are the backbone of patient care. Almost every aspect of a patient's journey will

be influenced by a nurse. Our role is so important as we provide physical and emotional support, ensure the safety of patients, and advocate for them during one of the most challenging and vulnerable times in their life.”

It is this passion for nursing and Susan's experience in the field that has resulted in Susan being the successful recipient of a 2021 Arrow Trace Richey scholarship enabling her to complete a Masters of Cancer and Haematology Nursing at the University of Sydney.

Susan is appreciative of this opportunity saying: “Arrow is a

vital champion for providing funding and support for the BMT sector. Arrow's generosity has aided the refurbishment of the BMT ward at my workplace to create a purpose-built facility for our specialisation.

“I feel so lucky to be able to provide care to patients in this unique environment and feel so grateful to Arrow for continuing to support the education of nurses.”

We look forward to following Susan's progression through her studies as a rising star in the profession.



