

CAPTURING THE HEART OF ST VINCENT'S

PULSE



ST VINCENT'S
HOSPITAL
MELBOURNE

July 2022

FUTURE FOCUSED 8

New ACMD research
facility underway

KIDNEY HEALTH 3

A campaign to support
First Nations people

Doing OUR PART

Helping keep the community vaccinated



Message from the CEO

There are pivotal moments in life that bring us together in ways we never envisioned. As we reflect on the past few years, it's clear that the COVID-19 pandemic will go down as one of those times.

At St Vincent's we proudly stepped up to provide the extra level of care that was urgently needed. Our frontline and behind-the-scenes teams navigated surges of rapidly changing challenges without hesitation, even as case numbers skyrocketed, and conditions became increasingly daunting.

Having to wear masks makes it impossible to see the smiles we share with you each day, but it is still possible to hear kindness through our reassuring words, see understanding in our eyes and feel the compassion expressed through our staff's gentle care.

As part of the state-wide efforts to keep Victoria safe, our Hospital helped lead community vaccination centres at the Royal Exhibition Building and the Campellfield drive-through. Vaccination milestones were celebrated and the hope for a brighter future was warmly embraced.

St Vincent's is known for going beyond to improve the quality of life for our patients and residents. From investigating the use of artificial intelligence to improve breast cancer detection, to designing an app that can assist our culturally and linguistically diverse patients and residents to communicate with healthcare workers about their daily

care; and, expanding our Hospital in the Home program to offer even more services, our focus on providing targeted care and research to better today's health outcomes continues to be a priority and grow in strength.

The new Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery (ACMD) being built at our Fitzroy campus is yet another example of how we are leading change with innovation. Construction on this new landmark building – Australia's first collaborative, hospital-based biomedical engineering research centre – is now underway and I'm sure, like us, you will be excited to watch it take shape over the next few years.

I hope you enjoy reading this latest issue of *Pulse* that celebrates the spirit of St Vincent's and our commitment to providing healthcare that makes a difference.

Angela Nolan

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Cover image: Chris Groenhout

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and water where we live and work. We respect their spiritual connections to country and community and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.



Image: Holly Graham

Associate Professor David Goodman (far left) and Amy Atkinson

Starting a conversation to save lives

Am I on THE LIST?

In Australia, about 13 per cent of patients on dialysis identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Despite this staggering number, only 2.5 per cent of patients who receive a kidney transplant are Indigenous.

To change these statistics, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne clinicians, Associate Professor David Goodman, a nephrologist, and Amy Atkinson, a dialysis nurse, launched Am I on the List – a campaign with the aim to encourage First Nations people with kidney disease to ask their doctor if they are on the kidney transplant waitlist.

A/Prof Goodman said multiple factors contribute to the disparity between First Nations people receiving a kidney transplant.

"In developing the Am I on the List Campaign, we spent five years interviewing First Nations patients to understand the factors that supported them to receive a kidney transplant," said A/Prof Goodman.

"Research shows that medical comorbidities and psychosocial and cultural factors in First Nations communities all contribute to this difference. This was also reflected in our interviews."

Launched in February, the Am I on the List campaign featured two videos, with patients Kim and Trent telling their stories. In the videos, Kim and Trent share their experiences of receiving a kidney transplant and how it's positively impacted their lives.

Published across social media, the videos were also picked up by public broadcaster, ABC, helping to share the message further.

"We hope that through this campaign we can encourage

A second chance



After six years of being on dialysis, Trent (left) received a kidney transplant in 2006. He was only 17 when he first received the diagnosis that he had kidney disease.

Involved in a number of sports growing up, Trent had always been very active and healthy. But that all quickly changed.

To get back to his passions and what he loved, Trent needed to have a kidney transplant. Now, Trent works with Traditional Owners across Victoria, and is passionate about cultural burning.

"Cultural burning for me is my passion. It's what I do, it's about engaging, it's almost my kinship law as well," said Trent. "There's no way I'd be able to do the job 100 per cent what I do now, if I was still on dialysis."

patients to be actively involved in transplant discussions with their GPs. Having a greater understanding of the assessment process has the potential to lead to earlier listings on the kidney transplant waitlist for a greater number of patients across Australia," added A/Prof Goodman.

For more information and to view Kim and Trent's videos visit www.svhm.org.au/kidneytransplant



Inspired to serve

Alfie Sambile (left) joined the St Vincent's vaccination team in October 2021, just one month after his father sadly passed away from COVID-19 in the Philippines.

For people who received their vaccination at the Royal Exhibition Building and Campbellfield, he was one of the friendly faces checking them in and ensuring all of their information was accurate and up to date.

For Alfie, working in the team helped him through an exceptionally difficult period.

"Helping to support Victoria's

COVID-19 rollout gave me a purpose. I loved coming into work and having a chat with everyone who walked through the door," said Alfie.

"My father received the COVID-19 vaccine just before he contracted the disease. I often wonder if he would still be here with us if he'd received the vaccination earlier.

"We're very lucky in Australia to have access to many vaccinations, and I'm so proud to have been a part of a team that provides this care," added Alfie, who is now working as an Administration Assistant at St Vincent's.

Closing Victoria's flagship centre

After 366 days and more than 400,000 vaccinations, Victoria's flagship vaccination centre at the Royal Exhibition Building closed its doors for the final time.

The year-long vaccination effort left behind a sense of camaraderie and significance that will long be remembered by our staff and the community we served.

Susan White, Operations Manager of St Vincent's Vaccination Programs said she'll never forget the days spent talking with Victorians standing in the queues that were snaking around the side of the building.

"These times were often in a lockdown when nerves and anticipation were high. Answering people's questions and being able to share a laugh lightened the mood and kept us inspired through these times," said Susan.

Reaching vulnerable communities

While our mass-vaccination efforts have supported the thousands, initiatives closer to home have played an important role providing vaccinations to hard-to-reach groups.

In partnership with the Salvation Army Access Health, our Mobile Immunisation and Health Service has delivered more than 2600 essential vaccinations to vulnerable people in Melbourne, including those experiencing homelessness.

The focus then moved to delivering COVID-19 booster shots and the flu jab, in addition to general health support and alcohol and other drug harm reduction services.

"By providing vaccinations in spaces where people feel safe and connected, we can ensure these people aren't left behind," said Andrew Chan, Project Lead and Psychosocial Stream Manager of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's Healthcare for the Homeless.



Our Mobile Immunisation and Health Service at work (top) and our child-friendly immunisation space at the drive-through Campbellfield complex (above)



Food Services (left) and Health Information Services (below) have played key roles in providing essential Hospital support during the pandemic



Behind the scenes

The vital role played by our non-clinical teams as we fight COVID-19

Since the beginning of the pandemic, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's non-clinical teams have continued to provide behind-the-scenes support, acting as a backbone to the organisation through the most challenging times. Staff have been introduced to new buildings, workforces and workflows – all to support the pandemic response across our Hospital's various sites.

Creative initiatives

Part of this vital contribution was provided by our Food Services department which produces over 55,000 meals for St Vincent's patients each month.

The demand of COVID-19 meant Food Services needed to introduce various initiatives throughout some of the hardest periods, including changing rosters to allow for COVID-safe spacing between staff as they worked, creation of 2,000 frozen meals to ensure continued meal supply for each site during times of emergency, and adapting to global food shortages.

"We were busy pre-planning and preparing to ensure we were always able to provide our service," said Jose Quezada, Food Services Manager.

The Food Services team also created and implemented an emergency seven-day menu as food and staffing shortages continued to impact the department.

"I'm proud of the team. They demonstrated endurance, perseverance and selflessness throughout COVID-19, and they always put the patient needs first," said Jose.

Persevering through isolation

The Health Information Services (HIS) team also played a key role. This team manages and maintains one of the Hospital's most essential resources – our patients' medical records and information.

Like many other departments across the organisation, much of the HIS team had to work remotely when Victoria's second wave hit.

"This was incredibly challenging given the complex nature of our work and, at times, quite stressful, but we developed quick and effective workarounds that ensured our level of service was never compromised," said Sally Bray, Acting HIS Manager during COVID-19.

The team adapted to a plethora of changes including the introduction of daily reporting to the Department of Health, mandatory reporting of Fever Clinic presentations and the collaboration with St Vincent's Private Hospital Melbourne Medical Records team to support the elective surgery overflow as a part of our COVID-19 response.

Though the changes COVID-19 created added to their workload, the HIS team never faltered in its ability to maintain the highest standard of work, including uploading 48,000 images to online medical records per week – a staggering 2.5 million images for the year.

"It was one of the most challenging times our team has ever had to face but we all pulled together to find ways around the obstacles," said Amity Chan, Acting Clerical Supervisor during COVID-19.



War veteran remembered

A special tribute to honour a St Vincent's WWI nurse

Committed to care

Marie (pictured as a young girl above) was born in Bendigo in 1870 and was 42 when she started her nursing training at St Vincent's, which she completed in January 1915. In January 1917, she enlisted for overseas service in the Australian Army Nursing Service. She departed Melbourne on the SS Khiva in May 1917 to work at the 34th Welsh General Hospital (WGH) in Deolali, India. Challenged by cholera, small pox and the plague, the 34th WGH nurses and their patients – many of them Turkish prisoners of war – also had to contend with the 1918 Spanish influenza pandemic. Marie was repatriated home in August 1918 due to ill health and did not return to nursing.



From left: Barbara Cytowicz, Clare Dyer, Sr Maureen Walters, Paula Furze and Margaret Batrouney

In 2015, the St Vincent's Archives and Heritage Centre received an Anzac Centenary Community Grant to trace and document stories about St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's World War I nurses.

This project involved commissioning a historian to provide a comprehensive list of nurse war veterans from the Hospital. At the start of the project, only two nurses had been formally identified but this research later revealed there were 68 St Vincent's nurses who served during World War I.

Among the serving members was Marie Evelyn Armstrong, who Archives Volunteer Researcher, Maureen Mitchell, found listed in the Boroondara General Cemetery records. She learned there was no plaque at Marie's burial site to commemorate her and shared this information with St Vincent's Hospital Graduate Nurses Association members, Paula Furze and Margaret Batrouney, who established a project to help commemorate Marie's life and wartime service. St Vincent's Hospital Archives and Heritage Curator Barbara Cytowicz assisted with additional research.

The Association raised the funds required for a plaque for Marie's unmarked grave and held a special ceremony last year on Remembrance Day to honour the former nurse.

Representatives from St Vincent's Hospital, the Sisters of Charity, St Vincent's Graduate Nurses Association and the St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne Archives and Heritage Committee attended the installation of the plaque on Marie's grave, along with members of Marie's family, including her great great-nephew, Stephen.

Sr Maureen Walters rsc, past Mother Rectress of St Vincent's Hospital and a representative of the Sisters of Charity that founded St Vincent's in 1893, unveiled the plaque at the service.

Kathryn Riddell, the Hospital's Chief Nursing Officer, said remembering Marie in this special way is significant.

"This is a reminder for myself and our current generation of nurses who have been battling the COVID-19 pandemic for the past few years that, like our forebears, there have been significant times in history that have tested our resilience, compassion and commitment. We feel a greater sense of connection with the nurses who have walked before us, particularly those like Marie, who nursed during a time of crisis," said Kathryn.

GREEN LIGHT FOR ACMD



Building of the new state-of-the-art research centre is underway

Building approval for the new Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery (ACMD) was formally announced by the Victorian Government when Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Jaala Pulford, visited St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne earlier this year.

Construction work has now commenced on the new 11-storey state-of-the-art facility that will stand proud on the site of St Vincent's former Aikenhead Wing – once used as accommodation for the Hospital's trainee nurses.

Angela Nolan, CEO of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, said the new purpose-built centre will allow the translational research done through ACMD to grow at pace and will extend the valuable work that is already underway to fast-track vital medical research, so it can be used to help patients sooner.

"At St Vincent's, we have a long, proud history of tackling the toughest and most complex health problems – something that is at the core of the ACMD vision," she added.

Specialised research, development and engineering areas with advanced capabilities will form part of the new building. The design will include 3D printing laboratories, a human kinetics lab, special insulated rooms that enable the

"ACMD's new and unique setting will break down barriers to bring the best and brightest minds... together"

– Dr Erol Harvey

development of sensitive hearing and vision technologies, engineering workshops to produce medical device prototypes and robotics, as well as collaborative spaces for students and researchers.

Another highlight is the education centre that will be embedded within ACMD. This will accommodate a dedicated teaching facility to nurture future clinical, nursing, allied health and biomedical research innovators and leaders. The space will incorporate multiple seminar and tutorial rooms, a clinical simulation laboratory, and a large lecture theatre extending over two levels with scope to host national and international conferences and major events.

Innovation and collaborative partnerships



From left: Dr Erol Harvey, Minister Jaala Pulford and Angela Nolan

are key to ACMD's success and underpin its results. The Centre brings together leading universities, research institutes, a tertiary hospital and major industry partners to work together under the same roof on life-changing medical research projects and discoveries.

ACMD is a collaboration of nine partner organisations – St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, St Vincent's Institute of Medical Research, the Bionics Institute, the Centre for Eye Research Australia, University of Melbourne, RMIT University, Swinburne University of Technology, Australian Catholic University and the University of Wollongong Australia.

"ACMD's new and unique setting will break down barriers to bring the best and brightest minds, and a wide variety of skill sets, together, in a dedicated building that is right in the heart of St Vincent's Hospital, to solve some of the world's toughest healthcare challenges – something that has never been done before," said Dr Erol Harvey, the CEO of ACMD.

In a premier position on the northern edge of the CBD, the design has been commended as visually engaging and will reinvigorate an important city entry corner perspective.

"The new ACMD building has been sensitively and thoughtfully created to complement its location within a world-heritage precinct and is set to become a Melbourne landmark," said Andrew Crettenden, ACMD Project Director.

A working model of ACMD has been operating on a modified scale through the BioFab3D lab at St Vincent's Fitzroy campus since 2016. The new building opens up significant opportunities to broaden ACMD's capabilities and scope in device innovation and dealing with chronic disease.

Scheduled for completion in 2024, the \$206 million project is funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments, St Vincent's Health Australia, ACMD partners and philanthropy, and forms part of the Melbourne Biomedical Precinct Master Plan.

To donate or learn more about ACMD, visit acmd.org.au

An artistic render of the atrium at the new ACMD building (right)

An artistic render of the clinical simulation lab at the new ACMD building (below)



National Assembly launches

A group of high-profile Australians has thrown its support behind the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery (ACMD) as the future of medicine.

The newly formed ACMD National Assembly was established to raise awareness in the broader community around the life-changing work being done at ACMD.

Its focused efforts will highlight the Centre's strengths as a global medical innovator, charged with fusing engineering and medicine together to bring viable health solutions to life for patients suffering from chronic illness.

Former Governors-General, Sir Peter Cosgrove and Dame Quentin Bryce, and two-time Paralympian gold medallist and a former soldier, Curtis McGrath, are among this esteemed group's founding members.



From left: Sir Peter Cosgrove, Dame Quentin Bryce and Curtis McGrath

Berengarra:
Offering aged
care with a
difference

One year on



Berengarra opened its doors in March 2021, providing an innovative approach to public residential aged care that values and preserves a person's dignity, independence and identity.

The 90-bed aged-care facility at our St George's Health Service site in Kew includes accommodation for older people with mental health issues.

Set in leafy garden surrounds, Berengarra – an Aboriginal word for land around Kew – is led by Margaret Curtis, Director of Nursing Residential Services at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne and Facility Manager at Berengarra.

"Berengarra has an air of calmness; it's a happy place that has a sense of community. We have such a strong team, with good leadership and support, which is something I'm particularly proud of," said Margaret.

"The emphasis at Berengarra is on person-centered care, with our residents' best interests at the heart of everything we do. Those who have made it their home bring with them the richness of their life stories and I love how this adds to the warm, family-like atmosphere we nurture here."

Berengarra offers a comfortable environment with well-appointed common areas, including lounges and dining rooms on all levels, three large multipurpose activity rooms, access to landscaped gardens, lifestyle programs, allied health and pastoral care and dietician-approved meals.

Each floor is smartly zoned into private wings of no more than eight bedrooms to create a welcoming sense of community among residents. There are also 12 sets of adjoining rooms to cater for couples, siblings or friends who want to stay near each other, which have been very popular.

Part of the Victorian Government's plan to modernise public sector residential care in metropolitan Melbourne, the \$55 million facility offers high-level support with a nurse-based model that provides around-the-clock specialised care, expert medical and clinical advice for complex care situations and access to palliative care specialists.

Mike's story

Mike Caifa (below) moved to Berengarra in 2021 with his wife, Jan, who requires a high level of care due to her medical conditions.

He was her primary carer at the family home for many years, until his own health deteriorated.

A footballer with a long career in both the VFL and then the AFL, Mike now happily embraces life at Berengarra with fitness the big focus of his day.

A gentle jog around the grounds is something he regularly enjoys, and he even leads his own five-minute gentle exercise routine with the nursing team consisting of some easy stretches twice a day, to get them "warmed up" for their shift.

"It's great to see residents like Mike enjoying life here in their own special way," said Cleo Cruz, one of the Associate Nurse Unit Managers at Berengarra.



Award-winning care

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne was named in *Newsweek's* World's Best Hospitals for 2022. It placed in the top five Australia-wide and in the top 250 hospitals across the world.

The ranking was based on a combination of patient experience surveys, medical key performance indicators and hospital recommendations from healthcare professionals.

In sharing the results, *Newsweek* said that what set the world's leading hospitals apart was their continued ability to deliver the highest-quality patient care and conduct critical medical research while battling the challenges of COVID-19.

"Our commitment to our values in delivering compassionate and excellent care to all of our patients has not wavered throughout the pandemic. Our staff have continued to go above and beyond at all times and our highly active research community continues to be recognised internationally for translational research," said St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's Chief Executive Officer, Angela Nolan.

Last year, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne was awarded the Most Outstanding City Hospital in Australia

at the 2021 Australian Patients Association National Awards.

These awards recognise best practice by healthcare providers and healthcare services in the delivery of patient care, as nominated by patients and their families throughout Australia.

"At St Vincent's, we are always striving for something greater; looking to do more; do better; and aim higher for the people who put their care in our hands," said Angela.



Heart matters



John Oakes (left) found a rather special way to thank St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne for the wonderful care he received after his heart surgery 11 years ago.

Before he was discharged, John donated a collection of tiny wooden birds and crosses to the Hospital for staff to share with patients in need of some emotional support during their stay.

Designed to sit neatly in the cup of a patient's hand when they are experiencing moments of unease or feel low, each piece is lovingly hand-carved by John – a keen whittler from the Victorian town of Bridgewater.

Fondly known around St Vincent's as The Birdman, John has donated more than 1800 Comfort Birds over the years that have been shared with patients across the Hospital, and he hasn't stopped yet.

"John suffers with arthritis – but that certainly hasn't stood in his way," said St Vincent's Pastoral Care Practitioner Shaun Dowling-Horgan, who described the difference John has made to so many people as deeply moving.

Shaun recalled seeing a patient tightly holding one of the tiny wooden birds in her hand. She told him: 'I hold this piece of love in my hand, and it brings me great comfort and restores my faith in humanity'.



Above: Easter festivities were embraced with joy around our different sites. We took this time to say a big thanks to our hard-working teams with some special treats that included a delicious pancake breakfast on Shrove Tuesday, loads of hot cross buns on Good Friday and plenty of chocolate goodies. From left: Susma Thapa and Chungda Gurung, nurses at our Fitzroy campus.

Below: Beryl, 97 (right) generously donated this hamper full of goodies she won at her retirement home to The Cottage at St Vincent's, which provides Hospital in the Home care and support to the homeless and those at-risk of homelessness. St Vincent's holds a special place in Beryl's heart; as a former patient she is truly grateful for the wonderful care she received. Her granddaughter, Chantelle Robinson (rear), is part of our Elective Surgery team, and has worked with us for 15 years.



OUT & ABOUT

Celebrating life across
our different sites



Left: A spectacular cake and some traditional Chinese dances were part of the memorable surprises staff at Cambridge House organised to help resident Mrs Cui Ye celebrate a birthday milestone when she turned 110 earlier this year, making her a supercentenarian!





Above: This beautiful artwork was created by St Vincent's Indigenous Recruitment Coordinator, Chris Delamont, for our Education and Learning (E&L) unit. Titled *Girra-Maa Giiny* (The Uplifted Heart) it represents the E&L team as a foundation for hope, endurance and positive action. The artwork took Chris 59 hours to complete and features symbols that powerfully depict the core values of St Vincent's. Chris (right) is pictured with Jade Murphy, General Manager of Education and Learning at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne.



Above: Research is a key part of the work we do. Currently, we have some 1,400 clinical research trials underway investigating new procedures, practices and potential solutions that aim to improve patient health outcomes. Our Haematology department is presently running 175 clinical trials that involve 60-70 per cent of our haematology patients with blood cancer. Pictured from left is Anupa Dey, A/Prof Matthew Ku and Natthida Khajornjiraphan, from our Haematology team.



Above: The Briar Terrace program has been operating at St Vincent's for 30 years. It provides Melburnians living in isolated conditions with a welcoming place they can come for a chat with our friendly volunteers. Hugh (left) has been a volunteer at our Fitzroy campus for 10 years and is seen here enjoying a cup of tea with one of our Briar Terrace program visitors.

Above and left: To celebrate the feast day of St George, staff at our St George's Health Service were greeted with a complimentary morning tea of mouth-watering donuts and refreshing fruit packs. Pictured (above left) is Glenda Maitland from our Food Services team.

Talk to Me App

Talk to Me is designed to help our culturally and linguistically diverse patients and residents communicate with healthcare workers about their daily routine care.

Led by St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, the project has been developed by health professionals in collaboration with medical interpreters, cultural diversity trainers and other experts.

Monita Mascitti-Meuter (right), Cultural Inclusion Lead at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne inspired the concept, based on her work experience in aged care residential facilities.

"Some residents have spent years hearing their own language spoken only by family or at important points of their clinical care, when an interpreter is provided. That said, the Talk to Me app doesn't replace the need for an interpreter, but is designed to address the gaps for our patients and residents requiring 24/7 care," explained Monita.

With its first iteration in 2017, the app has now been upgraded to a Progressive Web App thanks to a City of Melbourne Connected Communities grant.

Talk to Me includes a health professional and patient-user interface, audio component, and large, easy-to-read



script, facilitating brief, sentence-based conversations across Arabic, Cantonese, Croatian, Greek, Hakka, Italian, Macedonian, Mandarin, Serbian, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese.

It is now formally part of the patient and resident services offered at St Vincent's, where about 38.6 per cent of our patients are born overseas.

Supporting our

When the influx of COVID-19 cases started to put pressure on our teams back in August 2021, St Vincent's Foundation reached out to our donor community. We asked for their help to purchase vital equipment to support our nurses.

The response was overwhelming. Thanks to our generous donors, more than \$378,000 was raised for the Emergency Appeal.

Our corporate partners also contributed \$85,000 in gifts and cash to the appeal.

This collective support has been used to purchase essential equipment, including computers on wheels for our nursing teams, iPads, automated defibrillators and vital signs monitors.

We are extremely grateful for the outpouring of support we've received from our St Vincent's family of donors. It validates the exceptional and compassionate care St Vincent's nurses provide to their patients, each and every day.

To support St Vincent's nurses: stvfoundation.org.au/donate



Australia's first IBD PREGNANCY CLINIC

Specialised help available for women with IBD to navigate safe pregnancies

In September 2017, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne opened the doors to Australia's first Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) Pregnancy Clinic. Since then, the clinic has helped almost 400 patients through a unique model of care focused around safe pregnancies and healthy babies.

IBD is a collective term for Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, which affects over 75,000 Australians. Patients at the clinic have access to a variety of services that include free onsite intestinal ultrasound and stool testing for inflammation – both useful and necessary as part of optimal pregnancy care for those with IBD.

The clinic is also dedicated to education and counselling to help improve patient knowledge and manage anxiety.

The specialist team monitors drug levels in patients and babies and leads international research to help determine the levels of drugs in mothers' and babies' systems. They also take time to discuss and answer any concerns patients may have regarding IBD and IBD medications in pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Dr Emma Flanagan works alongside Dr Emily Wright and Dr Ralley Prentice at the specialty clinic. They are all gastroenterologists with additional training in the treatment of IBD during pregnancy. Patients also have access to a specialised nurse, Alyson Ross, who is available five days a week to address any concerns between visits.

The IBD Pregnancy Clinic is based at St Vincent's Fitzroy campus and is available for regional patients via telehealth.



Baby love

Stefanie (above) has IBD. She was diagnosed in 2004 when she was just 15 and has been on medication to manage her condition since.

She was introduced to the service available at St Vincent's when she became pregnant with her first child. She quickly learnt the clinic would play a pivotal role in the safe delivery of her baby.

Having access to this valuable resource has helped her manage three healthy pregnancies.

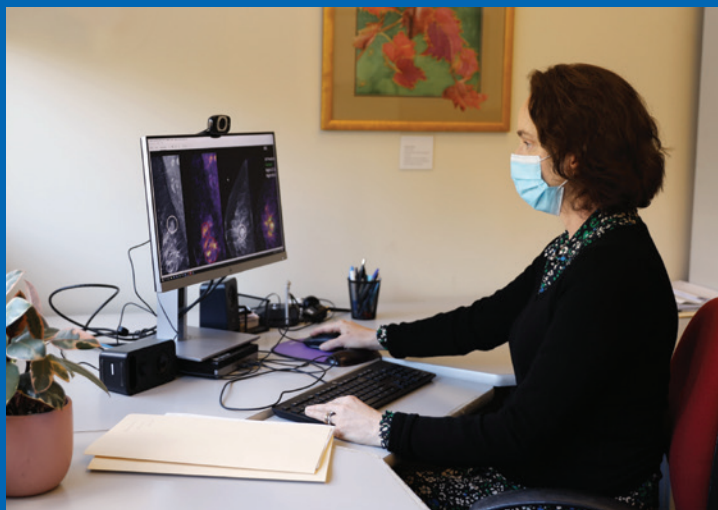
"I don't know what I would have done without it. They have helped me in every way, shape and form," said Stefanie. "Mentally, it has been a massive relief to have this support when my Crohn's flares up."



From left: Dr Ralley Prentice, Alyson Ross, Dr Emily Wright and Dr Emma Flanagan, from the IBD Pregnancy Clinic



BOLD new world



Using artificial intelligence to improve breast cancer screening

A research study exploring the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to analyse mammograms has earned the Clinical Director of St Vincent's BreastScreen the top accolade as Innovator of the Year at the 2022 Women in AI Awards Australia and New Zealand.

Adjunct Associate Professor Helen Frazer (above) was honoured to receive the prestigious award, along with winning the Health Category, for world-first research she is leading that aims to improve the accuracy of breast cancer screening.

According to Dr Frazer the new AI-based models aim to better detect cancer, lower unnecessary recalls to assessment, and improve timeliness, efficiency and participation. Ultimately, it is hoped this can provide a more effective and personalised breast screening service.

"The use of AI models may be a significant step in transforming screening, enabling more accurate detection when used in conjunction with a radiologist examining every mammogram," said Dr Frazer who has worked in breast cancer screening for over 20 years.

The project, known as BRAIx, is being jointly developed by St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, St Vincent's Institute of Medical Research, BreastScreen Victoria, University of Melbourne and the Australian Institute of Machine Learning at the University of Adelaide, in partnership with the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery (ACMD).

Dr Frazer said that the current breast screening service available to Australian women is a highly effective public health program reducing deaths from breast cancer. However, some women still experience interval cancers that were not able to be detected at the time of screening. Also, many women are recalled for assessment and subsequently determined to not have cancer.

The researchers hope to demonstrate that using AI models will reduce both occurrences.

"We are examining the use of AI algorithms to address the challenges radiologists face in reading mammograms," said Dr Frazer.

The research is also examining the potential to use AI models to better predict risk of breast cancer and enable tailoring of the screening program to women at higher risk.

Since its inception in 2020, the BRAIx project has moved from working in cancer-enriched data to testing AI algorithms in retrospective and prospective studies in real-world breast screening services.

"This is a really important requirement for testing artificial intelligence solutions for wider use and implementation in a healthcare setting," said Dr Frazer.

"The algorithms we are investigating are at an early stage and there is still more research work to do but we are hopeful they will transform the women's experience of breast cancer screening and save more lives."

Care goes beyond

Continued growth in 2022 sees our Mission in action



As a result of COVID-19, St Vincent's Hospital in the Home (HITH) program has experienced enormous growth.

Not only has HITH supported hundreds of COVID-positive patients through remote monitoring and clinical care, but the program has also more than doubled its target of 25 beds over the course of the pandemic.

A crucial pillar of St Vincent's Care Beyond the Hospital Wall Strategy, HITH is continuing to grow in 2022 by expanding its suite of home-based services through a higher-acuity, multidisciplinary program led by Nurse Unit Manager Corinne Howell (above left) and overseen by St Vincent's At Home Program Manager Louise Hogan.

"The HITH team collectively applies a problem-solving approach and is a progressive, committed and forward-thinking group of clinicians from multiple disciplines," said Corinne.

"Together, we're rushing towards Care Beyond the Hospital Walls at pace – it is a truly inspirational place to work!"

The seven-day service offers medical, nursing and allied health intervention for medically stable patients who are seeking and able to receive part or all of their care from the comfort of their own home.

In 2022, this includes new and emerging patient groups, and a broader range of care that spans general medical

conditions like respiratory infections and heart failure, day-of-surgery discharge for selected surgical procedures, and hospital equivalent care within residential aged care facilities.

According to lead HITH physician Olimpia Mateevici (above right), HITH essentially aims to "function as an inpatient unit, providing hospital-level care".

As part of the process, a dedicated medical team provides clinical management oversight, monitoring and reviews in person, via telehealth, home visits or at the dedicated HITH clinic. Nursing is provided as required, with up to two visits daily.

"We want to design a dynamic service in which both patients and medical providers will have confidence that the care delivered will be exceptional," Olimpia said.

The HITH program welcomes referrals for local, regional and remote patients.

Help at hand

After travelling to St Vincent's from Lancefield late last year following surgical complications from lap band removal surgery, Prue knew that her weeks-long healing period was key to making a full recovery.

Thanks to HITH, Prue was able to be discharged for home-based care in a matter of days following her procedure. The HITH team closely monitored Prue's progress every day and enlisted the help of Macedon Ranges Community Nursing to manage wound care from her house in Lancefield.

"The team was really friendly and knowledgeable," said Prue. "They went out of their way to make sure I was comfortable."

With two children under two and a partner who works nights, Prue said that being able to receive care at home was "an absolute game changer".



A patient receiving HITH services (above)

Breastcare upgrade

New imaging suite benefits

A brand-new 3D mammography/Breast Tomosynthesis unit and an advanced ultrasound machine are playing a key part in providing improved and enhanced breast assessment for patients using St Vincent's Breast Cancer Services.

The equipment was purchased thanks to generous donations received through a philanthropy campaign led by St Vincent's Foundation, when it was found the existing 2D mammography unit was nearing the end of its life and more up-to-date imaging capability was required.

"The new breast imaging suite provides the opportunity for a woman to have a full assessment of her breast symptoms using state-of-the-art equipment," said Dr Caroline Baker, Head of Breast Surgery at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne.

One of the major benefits of the new imaging suite is an ability to perform one-stop advanced breast imaging and interventions.

"This new equipment enables earlier breast cancer detection, better surveillance and staging of the known breast cancer patients, and contributes to better management and positive clinical outcomes," said Dr Kirti Mehta, Lead Breast Radiologist at St Vincent's Breast Cancer Services.

St Vincent's Breast Care Services prides itself on delivering patient-centred care and this equipment upgrade means the team is now able to offer patients higher quality personalised care.



Dr Kirti Mehta (above) with the new 3D mammography/Breast Tomosynthesis unit

Boost to surgeries

St Vincent's Hospital on The Park was announced as one of eight sites for Victoria's new Rapid Access Hubs to enable delivery of critical surgical and diagnostic procedures for more Victorians.

This move is part of the Victorian Government's \$1.5

billion 'COVID catch-up plan' to boost surgeries and clear Victoria's elective surgery waitlist.

It will benefit thousands of patients who have had their care deferred as a result of the pandemic, and allow extra surgeries to be carried out at St Vincent's in the next 18 months. The facility will be capable of treating up to 7000 patients a year when fully operational.

Our Rapid Access Hub will operate collaboratively with our Northeast Metro Health Service partners and St Vincent's has been core to creating the operating model.

Rapid Access Hubs are fit-for-purpose theatres designed to separate surgery that can be performed quickly, from emergency and acute surgery, and will be designated for patients who have been waiting for surgery for a long time and are at risk of their condition worsening.

"We are excited to be part of another milestone project that will improve the health of the Victorian community," said Angela Nolan, CEO of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne.





ALL TOGETHER

The Luckhurst family (from left):
Jennifer, Brian, Hannah and
Abbey with daughter Evie

department, is the family's longest-serving member. She has worked at St Vincent's now for 24 years and her husband, Brian, joined the Pathology department as a courier 13 years ago. Their daughters, Abbey and Hannah, also chose St Vincent's as their 'career home'.

Abbey, who recently had a baby, hopes that her daughter may one day end up working at St Vincent's, too.

"It made sense when my family followed me here to work, as we all have the same values," said Jennifer. "Knowing that we work towards a greater purpose of helping others allows us all to come to work and be proud of what we contribute."

Finding love

St Vincent's has played a significant role in Paula Brodie's life – her parents, Don and Judy, met while they were both studying at the hospital in the 1950s.

The couple worked at St Vincent's for 15 years and in that time formed incredible friendships with their colleagues and memories they often shared with their children.

"I remember Dad telling us about how there weren't enough athletes to run the Olympic flame to Melbourne from Canberra at the 1956 Olympics, so medical students at St Vincent's were approached to take part. Dad was among them," said Paula.

In 2015, Paula joined the St Vincent's team as well, working as a physiotherapist with GEM@Home – a service that allows patients to receive subacute care in their homes. She felt an instant connection and a strong sense of familiarity with the organisation.

"Mum and Dad always loved St Vincent's. The compassion you see through everyone that works here is not something you find in other workplaces," said Paula.

St Vincent's Foundation celebrates our Hospital's commitment to the community through its Love Your St Vincent's campaign and will be launching a brand-new campaign later in 2022 focused on generations of families who work at St Vincent's to highlight our staff devotion.

Being inspired to care runs in the family

It's not uncommon to learn someone has worked at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne for many years – and for some, their entire career. It's also not uncommon to discover their love for the Hospital has been passed on to their family members.

Generations of families have become part of St Vincent's rich history, and all are committed to delivering care that displays our core Mission Values of Compassion, Integrity, Justice and Excellence.

The Luckhurst family has dedicated more than 60 years of service to the Hospital, collectively. Jennifer Luckhurst, who manages the Telecommunications

*"The
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you see
through
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in other
workplaces"*

– Paula Brodie
(left with a picture
of her father and
his medical school
colleagues)



Spotlight on diabetes

Working to deliver innovative interventions



The development of kidney disease is a common and serious complication of diabetes and can lead to kidney failure.

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne strongly supports diabetes research and has teamed up with a national research centre launched this year that is aimed at improving the lives of people living with diabetes.

The Australian Centre for Accelerating Diabetes Innovations (ACADI) is led by the University of Melbourne, with affiliated centres located at three major Victorian hospitals including one based at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's Fitzroy campus.

St Vincent's Director of Endocrinology, Professor Richard Maclsaac, is heading up research projects for the new Centre focused on diabetic kidney disease, while Professor David O'Neal, from St Vincent's Department of Medicine, is leading research aimed at preventing hypoglycaemia and hyperglycaemic hyperosmolar syndrome that occurs when blood sugar levels are very high for long periods of time, and ketoacidosis – a condition that develops

when the body is unable to produce enough insulin.

"We need better ways of identifying patients at risk for kidney function loss and better treatment options for these patients. In addition, people with kidney disease often find it is very difficult to control their blood sugar levels," said Prof Maclsaac.

"Research projects based at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, funded by ACADI, will test novel treatments to prevent kidney function loss and to help patients with kidney disease keep their blood sugars levels in the safe range."

ACADI was established through the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) funding from the Australian Government's Targeted Translational Research Accelerator Program, delivered by MTPConnect.

Above, from left: Prof David O'Neal, Prof Richard Maclsaac and Dr Jean Lu, Project Lead for the artificial pancreas research project

Closing the loop

Managing glucose levels in people with advanced kidney disease can be challenging. The impairment in kidney function can prolong the action of insulin and, conversely, resistance to the glucose lowering effect of insulin may increase and dialysis treatment can impact an individual's glucose levels in different ways.

Prof David O'Neal (right) is leading a project that examines the usefulness of closed loop insulin delivery in people with diabetes and chronic kidney disease. If demonstrated to be effective, it may offer a practical option for these vulnerable individuals that could substantially improve their physical and psychological well-being.



The research will compare glucose levels in people with diabetes who have advanced kidney disease, using an artificial pancreas versus their usual care.

"A closed loop system (or artificial pancreas) continuously measures a person's glucose levels and uses a computer to automatically adjust the delivery of rapid-acting insulin accordingly to maintain their glucose levels within a healthy target range," said Prof O'Neal, who was presented the prestigious Diabetes Australia Millennium Award – Type 1 Diabetes this year towards this project work.



Paula (left) attends St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's nusinersen service to treat her spinal muscular atrophy

IMPROVING ACCESS

A new medication to manage spinal muscular atrophy gets PBS listing

Spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) affects about one in 10,000 babies born in Australia. It is typically diagnosed in childhood and can result in not being able to walk, loss of arm and hand function, reliance on mechanical ventilation and a shortened life expectancy.

There is no cure for SMA but there is a shared desire among patients to maintain independence for as long as possible.

Nusinersen is a medication that can help with this. But at \$100,000 a dose, it doesn't come cheap.

In April this year, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee recommended nusinersen be listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for adults over 18 years of age.

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne currently operates Australia's largest adult nusinersen service, involving a team of neurologists, interventional radiologists, nurses, pharmacists and medical imaging technologists.

Neurologist, Associate Professor Lauren Sanders, who coordinates the service, welcomed the decision to include nusinersen on the PBS saying it has given new hope to those living with this progressive neuromuscular condition.

Reported benefits of nusinersen include improvements in fine motor control, core stability and endurance.

"We have worked closely with the SMA community to

Ray of hope

Paula and Josh both have SMA and attend St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's nusinersen service.

Paula, 40, said she lost a lot of independence as her SMA progressed. She started to rely heavily on others, which became a challenge for her.

"Within four treatments, I was feeling stronger, happier, more motivated and could do more on my own. My quality of life has improved and my future looks a lot brighter," said Paula.

Josh, 28, commenced nusinersen treatment this year. The treatment has given him stability in life.

"I think the biggest thing is that I can get through the whole day and not be tired at the end of it, which is something I wouldn't have been able to do before," said Josh.

understand what is important to adults living with this condition and it's really exciting to think we can now achieve some of those goals," she said.

To access treatment with nusinersen, adults with SMA need a GP referral to a neurologist specialising in neuromuscular diseases.

Wrapped in kindness

The Compassion Quilt project is an initiative of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's Intensive Care Unit's End-of-Life Care Special Interest Group. In 2021, the group formed to help identify ways to improve the care offered to intensive care patients who were nearing end-of-life.

Julie-Ann Martin (right) has been an Intensive Care Unit nurse at St Vincent's for 23 years. Her role in nursing patients as they are dying inspired her to look at how their team could provide more visible resources to express a deeper level of care and compassion.

"Providing these patients with what we now refer to as a Compassion Quilt is something I've been thinking about for a while. The quilts are highly visible on the patient's bed and eloquently highlight a very special moment in their life," said Julie-Ann.



"To me, these brightly coloured quilts have such strength and power. They create a meaningful layer of understanding that helps patients and their families when transitioning."

As patients near end-of-life, a nurse or pastoral care team member will assist the family to select a quilt with colours and imagery that resonate with their loved one.

"People have generously embraced the project. We even had a patient from another unit hear about what we are doing. She contacted us and asked if she could make some quilts for our patients," said Julie-Ann.



Scholarship honour

Emily Hicks (left) was inspired to become a palliative care nurse when her aunt, Kathy Webster, was admitted to St Vincent's Caritas Christi facility in Kew.

"I was really touched by how gentle the staff were with her and how they kept us all so well informed in such a dignified way through what was a very difficult journey after she was diagnosed with a brain tumour," recalled Emily, who went on to become a palliative care nurse at Caritas Christi.

Founded by the Sisters of Charity in 1938, Caritas Christi is Victoria's first inpatient care facility and largest provider of palliative and supportive care in the state.

Emily, who has worked as a palliative care nurse for the past eight years, was presented the 2022 Dame Quentin Bryce Postgraduate Scholarship in Palliative Care Nursing earlier this year. The sought-after scholarship is awarded to a current St Vincent's palliative care nurse undertaking a Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma.

"This scholarship is a fitting recognition not only of the exceptional work of St Vincent's nurses, but also of the specialist skills and knowledge required to be an outstanding palliative care nurse," said Angela Nolan, CEO of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne.



Sue Cowling (left)

Through MY EYES

Nurse Unit Manager, Sue Cowling,
on working in the ED in a pandemic

I can still see those first haunting images of empty streets and locked-down apartments in China, and the healthcare workers in Italy struggling to control the ever-increasing number of patients on ventilators in their emergency departments.

There was a tsunami of information coming our way. Staff on the floor were talking about the rising numbers of deaths and the at-times fatal impact it was having on healthcare workers. It was overwhelming before it began.

Our Emergency Department's senior management team started daily 'War Cabinet' meetings; it felt like we were about to go into battle. There are certain moments in history when people are asked to step forward and this was our time.

There are images of the COVID-19 pandemic that will stay with me forever. Among them, when one of the first suspected-COVID cases presented here at our ED.

An elderly lady, short of breath and febrile was brought in by ambulance, with paramedics wearing head-to-toe suits, masks and protective glasses. As they wheeled her in, she was greeted by our nursing team, who were also dressed in full personal protective equipment (PPE) – long blue gowns, N95 masks and face shields.

Most of the patient's face was hidden, as she too was wearing a mask, but we could see her eyes and the fear they expressed. She became increasingly anxious when the team explained they were taking her into the designated COVID area and despite their best attempts to reassure her, the patient understood what this could mean.

Masks made it hard for us to provide comfort to our patients through smiles. But in time, we have learned how to use our eyes more to connect with them.

Wearing N95 masks for up to 12 hours a day was challenging. Indentations, sores and the exhaustion staff felt being in full PPE for long periods was draining but our team's commitment never faltered.

As we assisted our first patients with suspected COVID, one cubicle grew to three, then nine, then 15 beds, and we needed to establish more resuscitation areas in these spaces. Our ED was transformed like we'd never seen it before.

It was the individuals that make up the ED team who

*“Emotional support for each
other became as important as
the care we provided”*

went above and beyond, working double shifts and more, while fearful of the risk to their families at home.

Emotional support for each other became as important as the care we provided our patients, especially when the news became bleaker and demand for our services peaked.

We were all uplifted by care packages we received from the community. The moving notes from schoolchildren thanking us for taking care of everyone meant the world.

It can be in the worst of times that we see the best of people and the strength of their spirit.

COVID-19 still colours our lives and workplace but we have grappled with the challenges and now have more control, and although somewhat weary we have stepped up as we were asked and will continue to do everything we can to keep our community safe.



Love Your St Vincent's

www.loveyourstvincents.org.au

If you or a loved one have been treated at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, you'll know how committed we are to providing the best clinical treatment and most compassionate care for our patients.

Many people wish to express their gratitude for receiving exceptional care. There are many ways to say thank you.

We're here to help. To discuss how you would like to say thank you for great care, please contact St Vincent's Foundation CEO, Sue Parkes on 0412 488 341 or sue.parkes@svha.org.au or visit www.stvfoundation.org.au



Ways to say thank you

Share a story

Make a donation

Leave a gift in your will

Fund a scholarship

Request donations in lieu of a gift

Volunteer

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FOUNDATION



ST VINCENT'S
HOSPITAL
MELBOURNE

PO Box 2900 Fitzroy
VIC 3065 Australia
(03) 9231 2211
www.svhm.org.au

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