



Foundation-backed research presented on world stage

BOWEL CANCER IS THE SECOND MOST COMMON FORM OF CANCER AFFECTING NEW ZEALANDERS, AND ITS SPREAD CAN BE EXACERBATED BY SPREADING THROUGH THE PERITONEUM – THE ABDOMINAL WALL LINING, WHERE IT IS NOTABLY MORE RESISTANT TO CHEMOTHERAPY.

Since 2008, when Waikato Hospital and Braemar Hospital became the first medical centres in New Zealand to offer cytoreductive surgery (CRS) to remove diseased peritoneums and hyperthermic intraperitoneal chemotherapy (HIPEC) in the affected area, many patients have seen better health outcomes.

Dr Rennie Qin, General Surgery Registrar received \$19,120 from Waikato Medical Research Foundation to conduct a retrospective review of patient health outcomes since Waikato Hospital and Braemar Hospital began offering CRS and HIPEC, investigating factors that might lead to better short and long-term outcomes.

“Setting up a complex service and adopting new technology into New Zealand are no easy feats. This is particularly

challenging for centres that are not traditional academic and quaternary referral centres with limited funding, admin, and academic support.”

Dr Qin recently returned from the American College of Surgeons Clinical Congress in San Francisco, USA after being invited to present her findings, in what is a massive leap for Waikato’s medical research community and the fantastic work being done here in the region.

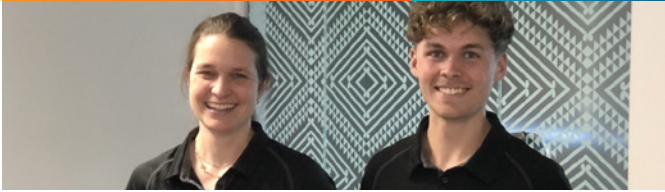
“The WMRF has allowed us to track our clinical practice and demonstrate that our outcomes are comparable to international standards. The fund has also allowed us to study new research questions that contribute to the continual shaping of CRS/HIPEC services worldwide.”

To make one-off or ongoing donations to the Waikato Medical Research Foundation Fund please visit wmrf.org.nz/make-a-donation

Research Grant Recipients

GRANT #346/ \$30,000

IN PROGRESS



BETTER REHABILITATION: AN IMPLICIT NON-CONSCIOUS INTERVENTION FOR PEOPLE WITH POSTSTROKE MENTAL FATIGUE

DR MEREL HOSKENS

Strokes are one of the most common diseases in New Zealand and around the world, and one of the most life changing. Post-stroke mental fatigue is often reported by those who have experienced a stroke, and tends to have a long-lasting effect on quality of life.

Dr Hoskens and her team were awarded \$30,000 by the Waikato Medical Research Foundation to explore a new approach to stroke rehabilitation that places a lower demand on cognitive processes, which has the potential to aid in the recovery process, especially for those people dealing with fatigue post-stroke.

Dr Hoskens and her team (Rich Masters and Ben Bidois) have begun data collection and are working closely with stroke clubs in Waikato and with Te Whatu Ora to recruit participants.

She said the project had been well-supported by the WMRF and the funding has enabled them to connect with fellow researchers, stroke victims, and caregivers about rehabilitation.



GRANT #337/ \$30,000

IN PROGRESS



A MULTI-CENTRE RANDOMISED CONTROLLED TRIAL OF POST-OPERATIVE DOXYCYCLINE ASSESSING RECOVERY IN PATIENTS UNDERGOING ENDOSCOPIC SINUS SURGERY FOR THE TREATMENT OF CHRONIC RHINOSINUSITIS

DR ANDREW WOOD

Dr Wood applied to Waikato Medical Research Foundation for a grant in 2022 to explore the use of antibiotics following sinus surgery - a common procedure.

Despite overuse of antibiotics being a looming global health threat, they are often used liberally, with "what harm can they do?" being a common justification.

While chronic sinusitis (sinus infection) is very common and affects around 10% of adults, it can often lead to endoscopic sinus surgery, with sinus surgeons often prescribing antibiotics following surgery.

This research explores the possibility that antibiotics following ESS can worsen patient recovery and drive antibiotic overuse.

In 2018, WMRF helped to fund an initial pilot study to explore patient outcomes and explore the role of antibiotics after ESS.

The pilot study suggested that antibiotics following ESS may actually worsen patient recovery and therefore contribute to antibiotic overuse.

This follow-up study, also funded by WMRF, recently recruited the 50th and final patient, and with some data still to collect and lab work ahead, Dr Wood said they are on track for a publish date in late 2025.

Well done Dr Wood!



2024 GRANT RECIPIENTS

ROUND 1

| | | |
|----------------|---|----------|
| Hamish Wu | <i>Validating the diagnostic accuracy of an artificial intelligence tool intended to enhance dermatology referrals in New Zealand</i> | \$30,000 |
| Manar Khashram | <i>A multicentre randomised trial: the Scandinavian trial of uncomplicated aortic dissection therapy (Sunday Trial)</i> | \$30,000 |
| Jade Tamatea | <i>Tōku Ara OraNga: a kaupapa Māori informed co-design of thyroid outpatient care</i> | \$14,515 |
| Vincent Reid | <i>Mapping fetal attention to environmental information</i> | \$28,029 |

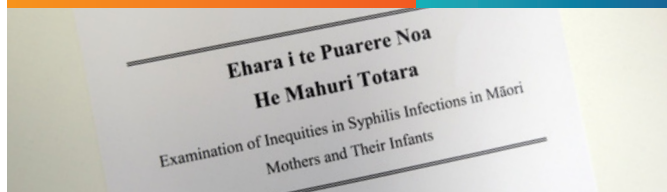
ROUND 2

| | | |
|-----------------|---|----------|
| Jesse Whitehead | <i>Geospatial methods to enhance disaster preparedness for a rural Kaupapa Māori Primary Health Organisation</i> | \$35,000 |
| Amy Jones | <i>An exploration of the impacts of WHIRI; a holistic, whānau inclusive, culturally safe model used to support Māori and Pacific peoples in the Waikato</i> | \$25,200 |

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GRANT #341 / \$12,699

COMPLETED



EHARA I TE PUARERE NOA, HE MAHURI TOTARA: EXAMINATION OF INEQUITIES IN SYPHILIS INFECTIONS IN MĀORI MOTHERS AND THEIR INFANTS

DR FRANCES ROBBINS

Leading sexual health professional Dr Frances Robbins has recently completed her Masters thesis on how Māori and Pacific communities are disproportionately affected by the ongoing syphilis epidemic here in New Zealand.

Dr Robbins' thesis, funded in part by the Waikato Medical Research Foundation, investigates data on Paakehaa, and Māori/Pacific island women and their infants and the rates of congenital syphilis across New Zealand's regions.

Her thesis has displayed inequities in rates of congenital syphilis across these ethnic groups, and identifies areas of intervention to reduce negative health outcomes for Māori and Pacific women.

Her research found Māori (72%) and Pacific (19%) infants accounted for 91% of cases of congenital syphilis.

The study identified key areas of intervention:

- 1) addressing structural root causes,
- 2) targeted areas along the syphilis pathway,
- 3) improving equitable syphilis surveillance to monitor progress.

Dr Robbins has been able to present her research internationally and nationally.



GRANT #340 / \$14,000

IN PROGRESS



HISTIDINE BIOSYNTHESIS IN PATHOGENIC NEISSERIA: A POTENTIAL DRUG TARGET FOR NOVEL ANTIBIOTICS

DR EMILY GROUT

Pathogenic *Neisseria* (a family of bacteria) are responsible for the STI gonorrhoea and life-threatening bacterial meningitis and septicaemia.

Infections and long-term health effects caused by *Neisseria* are a global health problem, and with a rapid rise in antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria, growing our understanding of pathways and bacterial metabolism pathways are key in the process of developing or enhancing novel drugs.

Dr Emily Grout received \$14,000 from Waikato Medical Research Foundation.

"It's looking very promising – we can already see the importance of these genes and this biochemical pathway in the growth of pathogenic *Neisseria* with growth being reduced when they are removed from our gonorrhoea model."

"I'm grateful to Waikato Medical Research Foundation for the support and funding, making it possible for early career researchers like me to bring research to light."



GRANT #347 / \$28,029

IN PROGRESS



MAPPING FETAL ATTENTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

DR VINCENT REID

Despite having access to more information than ever when it comes to the health of both mother and child during pregnancy, there's a lot we don't yet know about fetal development and what a fetus can sense, see, feel and hear during pregnancy.

Prof. Vincent Reid has been awarded \$28,029 to study the patterns of head and eye movements for a fetus during the third trimester, in order to possibly anticipate abnormalities in attention mechanisms.



Bequests – leaving a legacy of care

You may wish help us to help others with a bequest to the Foundation – that is, by leaving a gift or donation in your will.

Why make a bequest to the Waikato Medical Research Foundation?

The Foundation needs your support. As a Registered Charitable Trust, the Trust Deed has been written specifically to encompass the aims and objectives we see as vital to the long-term future of the Foundation. Bequests, legacies and other donated funds are invested wisely toward our Research Fund account, which will produce income to preserve and grow the activities form the base of the Foundation's activities within the Waikato region.

If you would like to make a bequest in a way that is special to you, or that we have not mentioned above, or if you have a general inquiry about making a bequest, please contact us at: admin@wmrf.org.nz



NEWS FROM THE CHAIR
Kylie Harcourt

The Waikato Medical Research Foundation had a successful year in 2024, with a rise in research applications, an increase in grant funding, and growth in our capital fund. I am pleased and proud to report on these activities and our achievements over the past year.

In 2024, we received a strong response in our two funding rounds with 15 applications submitted for research grants. Following the Foundation’s rigorous grant assessment process, the board approved funding for six research projects, totalling \$156,023 in awarded grants. We look forward to sharing updates on each project as they progress, making impactful contributions to the medical and science sectors, which in turn benefit the community we serve.

Pressure on the health sector remains significant, and in line with our commitment to health equity, the Foundation has focused on supporting research that advances community health, Maori waahine health, tamariki/rangitahi health, and rural health. By prioritising projects that address these unique and often underserved health needs, we aim to contribute to improved healthcare outcomes that are impactful and directly beneficial to the Waikato community.

I’d also like to recognise and thank our partners, Braemar Charitable Trust and Trust Waikato, whose ongoing financial support has been instrumental in enabling our work.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to my fellow trustees for their dedication and expertise. I would also like to recognise the long service and contribution from board member Gillian Spry, who retires this year after supporting the Foundation for eight years, and board member Frank Scrimgeour, for an immense 14 years of service to the Foundation – your support and dedication to the Foundation’s vision have been invaluable.

Kylie Harcourt
Chair, Waikato Medical Research Foundation

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