

# UQmedicine

Summer Edition 2020



The SHOW *must go on!*

Family  
is everything

Clinician Scientist Track  
- 10 years on

Keeper  
of curiosities

## Our purpose

Through the education we provide and the research we conduct, the Faculty's medical, biomedical and public health endeavours aim to save lives and improve human health in material and lasting ways.

## Our values

Pursuit of excellence  
Creativity and independent thinking  
Mutual respect and diversity  
Honesty and accountability  
Inclusiveness and wellbeing



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COVER IMAGE  
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## MESSAGE from the Executive Dean

2020 has been a year like no other. Every aspect of the Faculty of Medicine's activity has been stress tested and I am delighted to report that, although we are tired and in need of a rest, we have had an exceptional year. Our key relationships have been strengthened, our research performance significantly increased, and our teaching programs effectively delivered with empathy and innovation. So why has this occurred? The simple answer is people. Our professional and academic staff, students and key partners have worked together to achieve our goals and continue to serve our community. This edition of *UQmedicine* highlights the achievements of a few of our highly able staff. I would, however, like to thank our entire team for their contribution to the mission and values of the Faculty of Medicine in 2020. The end of the year is always a time to reflect on the year that has been and plan for the years ahead. I thought I would do a little of both in this editorial.

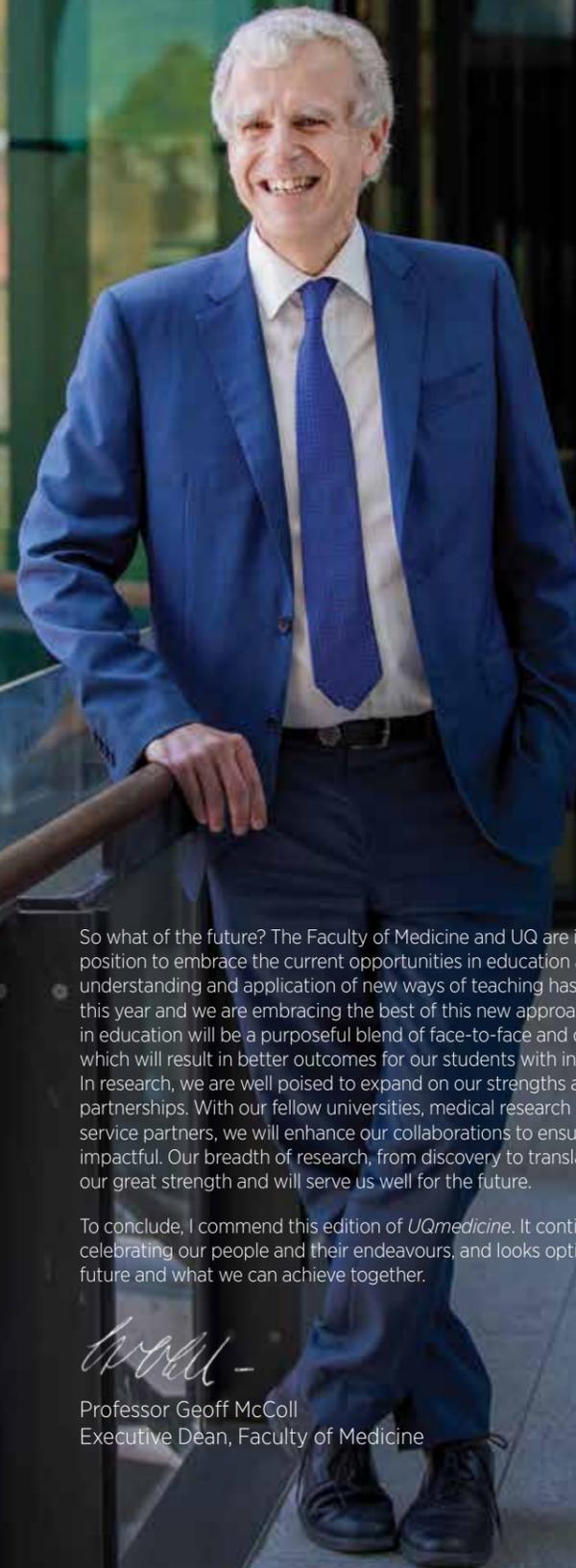
The year began with the completion of the Mayne Medical Building renovation. This spectacular Art Deco building completed in 1938 was in need of some attention and, with the assistance of Heritage Queensland, the University and a dedicated team of builders, we now occupy a building with restored function but retention of the exquisite features that define the building and its era. The Mayne Medical Building is the home of the Faculty of Medicine and its restoration allows many more to use and enjoy its functionality. Of particular note is the event space on level 4, which in the future will be the site of many gatherings. The Marks-Hirschfeld Museum of Medical History is another important component of retaining the legacy of the Faculty and will ensure we consider what we have learnt from history as we look forward. If you have a chance, please visit and enjoy the revival of an iconic building.

The Mayne family are an important part of our history and it is noteworthy that this year we celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Mayne bequest. Established in the wills of Dr James and Miss Mary Emelia Mayne, the Faculty of Medicine has benefited from the support of the bequest for the key Professors of Medicine and Surgery as well as research and teaching activity. We are particularly grateful to Mr John Moore, the Mayne Bequest Trustee, for his stewardship of this important resource.

Transitions in leadership are also important events to acknowledge. For the School of Biomedical Sciences (SBMS) we said farewell to Kaye Basford earlier in the year and welcomed Lizzie Coulson as the interim Head of SBMS. More recently, Charles Gilks concluded his term as Head of the School of Public Health (SPH) and we welcomed Liz Eakin as the new Head of SPH. I would like to sincerely thank Kaye and Charles for their sustained and effective contribution within and outside their schools. I am also delighted to report the appointment of Karen Moritz as our new Associate Dean (Research).

Our alumni are an important part of our legacy and I am delighted to report that two of our medical alumni, John Maunder and Michael Bonning, were acknowledged at the recent Courting the Greats event at Customs House. Both have made substantial contributions well beyond their vocation and are wonderful ambassadors for UQ.

Similarly, heartfelt congratulations to Kaye Basford AM, Ranjany Thomas AM and Jeffrey Lipman AM, who were recognised in the 2020 Queen's Birthday Awards and to Lisa Dingwall MSTJ, who was recently awarded the Order of St John for consistent and outstanding service, having tirelessly volunteered as a first-aid medic for the past 11 years.



Professor Geoff McColl  
Executive Dean, Faculty of Medicine

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# Family is EVERYTHING

By Georgina Hilder

The COVID-19 pandemic has given many people an opportunity to pause and reflect on what's most important. And for UQ Adjunct Professor of Public Health Sandra Creamer AM, that has always been family.

On 28 July, Sandra became a lawyer, and it was her own son, barrister Joshua Creamer, who moved her admission to the Queensland Supreme Court.

"He has walked this journey with me – giving me a big shout out, 'you can do this'," Adjunct Professor Creamer said.

The mother-of-four made history that day as the first Queenslander to be admitted by her son.

But, the real success story isn't becoming a lawyer. In fact, she completed her studies eight years ago, and has been busy travelling the world championing Indigenous rights since then without the time for legal formalities.

That just about sums up Adjunct Professor Creamer. She wants people to have more than she's had.

A Waanyi/Kalkadoon woman from Mount Isa, Sandra was raised by her father and 11 older siblings after losing her mother when she was just a baby. She learned to read from her eldest sisters who did not have the opportunity to go to high school.

"We grew up reading a lot, it was really encouraged. Knowing how little education my sisters received made me determined to appreciate mine," she said.

As a single parent who only got to grade nine herself, it wasn't easy to provide her four children with a quality education, but she managed to send them all to private school, while working and studying a law degree herself.

"Education is really important to me, no matter how hard it is. My children all had to work while they were at high school to help pay the school fees," she said.

"There have been plenty of moments when I didn't know what to do; moments when I wanted to pack it all in because the power went off or the car wouldn't start."

"We never had a lot of things growing up; we didn't have hot water in the house," she said.

"But my family instilled this really strong belief in right and wrong, and that sense of commitment to Indigenous communities."

Working at Legal Aid Queensland with victims of crime, Sandra developed a passion for helping vulnerable women and Indigenous people.

"Working there really changed me. I saw that there were many issues and injustices experienced by poor people."

Through her UQ role, and as CEO of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance (NATSIWA), Sandra has been working towards improving Indigenous women's health policy and practice. She has been part of Australia's delegation to the United Nations Forum for Indigenous Issues for over a decade. She also has a keen interest in international Indigenous rights, and is a Board Director for the International Indigenous Women's Forum, working with organisations in India, South America and Canada.



Adjunct Professor Sandra Creamer AM with her son, barrister Joshua Creamer.



Adjunct Professor Creamer AM with her family.

"We have an international school where we take Indigenous women to the United Nations' headquarters in New York to learn about international policy development and human rights," she said.

"So many women are forced to have children young, or fall victim to human trafficking or genital mutilation because they don't have any other options. I want to help Indigenous women be financially independent and empowered to have choices.

"That belief in the individual really makes an impact. It's what my life and my career is all about."

Sandra's work stems from her quest to make everyone feel worthy and loved; a value she's instilled in her own family.

"We were all really busy with work, school and study, but without fail, we came together every night at 6pm where we had a meal around the table.

"Coming from a big family, I really believe sitting around the table is the most important time of the day. You need to talk and stay in tune with everyone.

"Even when you disagree with your kids, you've got to keep communication open and support each other. That's what family is for – it's your foundation.

"I want my kids to understand the value of sisters and brothers. They are your unit.

"When we have each other, we have everything."



Adjunct Professor Creamer AM with her grandchildren.

# The course source

by Angie Trivisonno

Ask any golfer, the best courses are always the most memorable from beginning to end. It's the excitement of swinging into action, the hope that accompanies teeing-off into the wide blue yonder, praying for that rare hole-in-one. It's the joy of meandering the expansive green, giving everything your best shot. It's the frustration of landing in a sand bunker, trying to get yourself out of an unexpected rough patch, and it's the intense elation, or despair, at coming out the other end under or over par. When you experience an outstanding course you too soar like an albatross, not just a little birdie, and that's what makes it memorable.

Associate Professor Craig Hacking, Academic Lead for Clinical Radiology at UQ's Office of Medical Education, and Director of Medical Imaging at Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH), knows that feeling well, having been an avid golfer since childhood.

"My brothers and I grew up near a golf course, so I started playing golf at a young age with our dad and really enjoyed the challenge," Dr Hacking said.

"It taught me important life lessons like being patient, working independently, learning from others, respecting my elders and taking responsibility for my actions".

Dr Hacking drives home these lessons daily as he delivers innovative radiology content to students in the UQ MD program, so they too experience what it's like to complete a memorable course.

"The inspiration I draw from introducing medical imaging in Phase 1 and 2 of the UQ MD program is exposing students to the importance of radiology in modern clinical practice, and (hopefully) encouraging some of them to pursue it as a career.

"I've created a UQ website for MD students, called UQ Radiology Resources, full of links and resources for MD students mainly using Radiopaedia, a free open-access online radiology website. I've also recorded more than 100 short radiology teaching video tutorials and lessons," he said.

A good friend of Dr Hacking, Melbourne radiologist Associate Professor Frank Gaillard, created Radiopaedia.org while working as a radiology trainee in 2005.

"It's a wiki-style website where volunteers contribute articles and cases that are relevant to radiology. Currently (August 2020), there are more than 38,000 cases and 14,300 articles on the site.

"A large group of editors from around the world volunteer daily to make sure all cases, articles and content edits are accurate, and maintain the quality standards our readers are used to. I've held several senior editorial and executive committee roles with Radiopaedia.

"I'm proud to say the website is the largest free online radiology resource, currently attracting more than 19 million page views per month, with more than 180,000 registered users globally.

"We offer video educational content to over 125 developing nations for free. Our mission is to create the best radiology reference the world has ever seen, and make it available for free, for all, forever.

"This year Radiopaedia has also been a trusted and up-to-date resource on COVID-19 imaging, with more than 130 educational cases uploaded and over 600 article edits as more literature is published."

So, while most of us were shouting a collective 'fore' in 2020, Radiopaedia and Dr Hacking were advancing through the pandemic.

"I was at the bottom of a steep learning curve at the most intense time of COVID preparations, being the new Director of Radiology at one of Australia's biggest and busiest hospitals, RBWH," Dr Hacking said.

"Fortunately, a few staff kept an eye out for me, asking if I was okay, and gave good feedback on the job I was doing. It meant a lot, and their positivity definitely rubbed off on me during some difficult times."

Just like legendary American golfer Ben Hogan once said, "As you walk down the fairway of life you must smell the roses, for you only get to play one round," and so Dr Hacking is now looking forward to life after COVID-19.

"I can't wait to travel again when things get back to normal; I really miss travelling, domestically and internationally.

"I'm also looking forward to Christmas because I love what it does to my kids. They get so excited, and to see them playing with each other and their cousins is just wonderful. Hopefully, we'll be allowed to meet with all our family to celebrate this year.

"And, then there's the long, hot summer evenings, swimming in the pool with the kids, BBQ dinners on the back deck, and playing a few rounds of golf, of course. Now that would be memorable!"



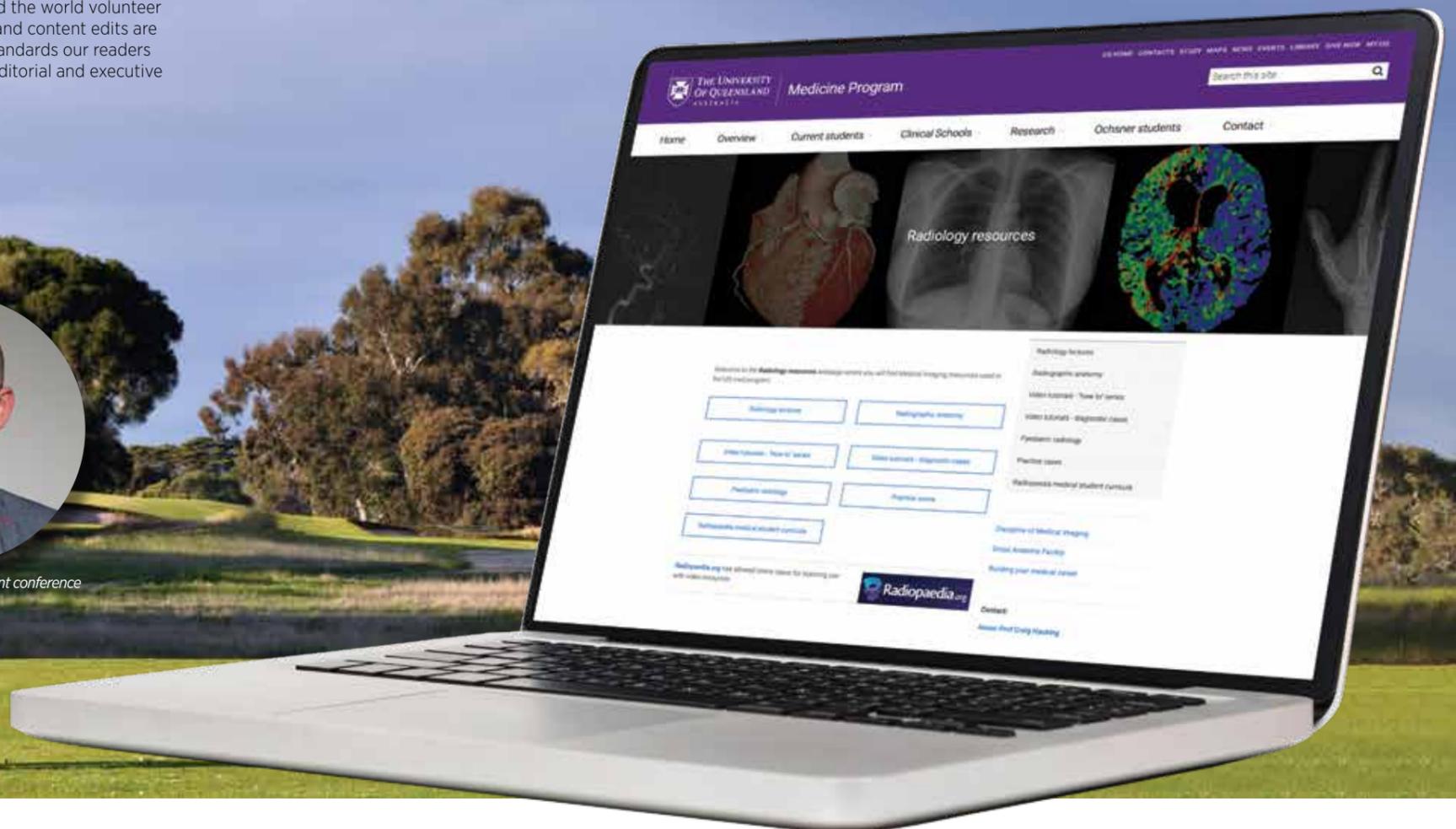
Associate Professor Craig Hacking on the golf course.



Dr Hacking conducting daily reporting at the Emergency and Trauma Centre at RBWH.



Dr Hacking speaking at a recent conference in Brisbane.



# Keeper of curiosities

by Angie Trivisonno

Being a 'curator' comes with a special responsibility, one that assumes guardianship of the most important historical collections. A curator's primary responsibility is clearly spelled out in the Latin origins of the word 'curare', which means 'to take care'. The sensitivity needed by such inquisitive souls requires patience, imagination, and a deep desire to explore history, science and art across time. The Faculty of Medicine's new curator of the Marks-Hirschfeld Museum of Medical History, Charla Strelan, fits the bill exactly.

"I'm a Brisbane girl who grew up in 1980s Sherwood, hooning around on bikes, climbing trees in the Arboretum and spending my pocket money on one- and two cent lollies," Ms Strelan fondly recalls.

"I remember as a child my favourite things were to explore, to argue and to learn. A similar sense of exploration and wonder has stayed with me ever since. The universe amazes me with something new every day, be it the moons of Saturn or the patterns on a bug.

Since joining the Faculty in May, Ms Strelan has wasted no time exploring her newest collection.

"The museum has the most fantastic objects from the past 200 years: my job is to bring best practice to the collection. This means revamping the way we display, catalogue, organise, conserve and store objects, with the aim of creating a unique, world-class collection for both exhibitions and research," Ms Strelan explains.

"Each individual object in the collection is inspiring. In addition to being beautiful and terrifying at once, they're fragments of history that are nothing short of miraculous.

"The more I learn about Queensland's medical history the more I'm driven to share the compassion and conviction of these incredible stories".



Charla Strelan

Ms Strelan has learnt a lot from UQ, with the University always being a part of her life in one way or another.

"My dad was an associate professor, and because universities were among the first to access the internet, I spent a lot of time as a child in his office discovering the wonders of Netscape," Ms Strelan recalls.

"I also studied at UQ myself, and around 10 years ago I had the privilege of working at the University's Anthropology Museum. Now I'm back!

"There's something unique about working in an educational institution.

An ear trumpet for listening to babies in utero, an umbilical clamp and a due date calculator wheel.



There's always a sense of enthusiasm and discovery that seems to permeate the hallways. I really appreciate it, especially as a workplace."

But, it's not just the indoors that Ms Strelan loves to explore.

"When I left Uni, I spent 12 years working with Indigenous communities in the Central Desert. I was a naive young white girl with an anthropology degree, there to write reports for mining companies and federal courts," Ms Strelan recalls.

"The patience, acceptance and generosity extended to me by the communities I worked in was just phenomenal – the women especially showed me such kindness. Being on country and sharing people's stories was an experience that changed my life forever".

The year 2020 has also been a life-changing moment.

"It's certainly been challenging; not being able to hug nearly broke me. I've found it helpful to focus on the things that I can be grateful for, like where we live for a start. We really are incredibly lucky".

It's clear that no matter how difficult things may appear, there is always joy to be found.

"The daily small and immersive moments of happiness give me the greatest joy," Ms Strelan reveals.

If you're interested in utilising your knowledge and interest in medicine and history as a volunteer to assist with museum operations and collection care, please contact [medmuseum@uq.edu.au](mailto:medmuseum@uq.edu.au).

"Birdwatching, playing music, breeze on my skin, old friends, a beautiful poem, artwork and my two beautiful children. The potential for joy is everywhere, and it's fantastic when you find it."

The Faculty's medical museum is certainly bringing Ms Strelan much joy, and 2021 is shaping up to be a busy year.

"I'd like to begin some important conservation work, rolling out an innovative exhibitions program, and implementing plans for a brand-new, state-of-the-art catalogue," Ms Strelan explains.

"I want the collection to start generating some interest and excitement in the Faculty! There is so much to be done and so much potential, it's inspiring."

The Marks-Hirschfeld Museum of Medical History houses one of Australia's finest collections of medical instruments and memorabilia.

Our recently appointed Museum Curator and Advancement Director would love to welcome you to visit the newly refurbished Mayne Medical Building at Herston in 2021.

Please email [med.advancement@uq.edu.au](mailto:med.advancement@uq.edu.au) if you're interested in a small group tour. Bring a friend or colleague and reminisce about your favourite times in medicine!

# Food on the BRAIN

By Georgina Hilder

Meet the UQ power couple working to improve the lives of people living with Motor Neurone Disease (MND)... by helping them enjoy food we all love!



Dr Frederik Steyn and Dr Shyuan Ngo have dedicated their careers to understanding how the brain deteriorates in people living with MND.

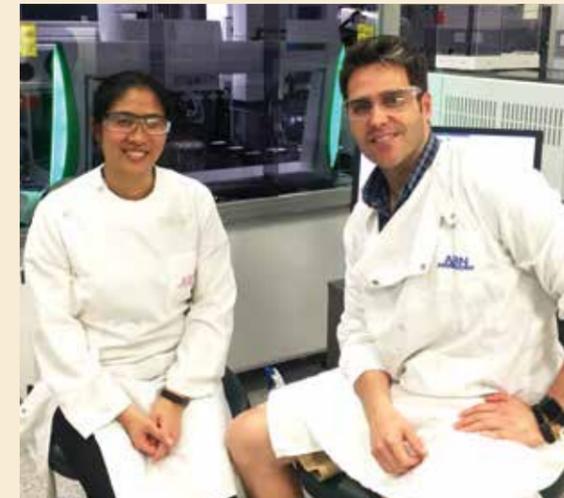
In a world-first observational trial, the married couple are studying tasty, high-calorie foods like ice cream, French fries, chocolate and cheese, and their effect on appetite and slowing down weight loss in people with MND.

"Food is central to life's enjoyment, but many patients with MND lose their appetite, which ultimately lowers their quality of life. Weight loss impacts disease progression and increases the risk of earlier death," Dr Steyn says.

"We're trying to understand how to help patients maintain their appetite, and the first step is to study how the brain reacts to food in patients with MND."

Both biomedical researchers, Dr Steyn and Dr Ngo met in a lab on Dr Steyn's first day at UQ in 2008.

"I had my eye on him instantly, so I asked if he wanted to help me cook sausages for the School of Biomedical Science's social



Dr Shyuan Ngo and Dr Frederik Steyn



"Everyone loves yum cha because dumplings are little packages of happiness," Dr Ngo says.

club. He told me he might help... but that he didn't eat meat... I was hopeful this wouldn't last long!" Dr Ngo laughs.

Dr Steyn had just moved to Australia from New Zealand to care for his mother, who had fronto-temporal dementia. It was a difficult time.

"Shu (Dr Ngo) sat with me by my mother's side the night she died. She has been my rock ever since," Dr Steyn says.

Meeting Dr Ngo opened up a whole new world for Dr Steyn. Dr Ngo's family owned Fortitude Valley's yum cha restaurant King of Kings and her life revolved around food.

"Food is a massive part of Chinese culture," Dr Ngo says.

With five brothers and two sisters, Dr Ngo helped run the family restaurant while growing up. School nights were busy, filled with laughter, homework, and of course, a seemingly unlimited supply of delicious food.

"Everyone loves yum cha because dumplings are little packages of happiness," Dr Ngo says.

"My mum died of cancer in 2008, and after that we sold the restaurant because her wish was to give her children better opportunities than my parents had."

As a biomedical scientist, food has remained a big part of Dr Ngo's life.

"During our South African honeymoon, we bought boerewors (South African sausage) and snuck off from our tour group to barbecue it on the side of the road with a random American couple!" Dr Ngo laughs.

"When I crave a certain food, I have to have it. It's like an obsession!"

The two researchers thoroughly enjoy what they do; being in the lab, right through to working with MND patients and forming relationships with the people they're trying to help.

For the past 10 years, the couple have pushed themselves out of their comfort zones in countless MND research fundraising challenges, including a 1,000 km virtual bike ride during the COVID-19 lockdown in May.

"I'm not very good on a bike, but we helped raise \$15,000! I also don't know how to swim well, but I've done that too to raise funds for MND!" Dr Ngo laughs.

They've worked with celebrity chef Ben Milbourne, as he created a dessert recipe inspired by his grandfather, whom had MND. The recipe was presented on his television show, *Food Lab*.

"In time, we will help design a cookbook specifically tailored for people with MND. We want to showcase recipes that are soft and easy to eat, but also tasty and high in calories. We also aim to hold many events to raise awareness of MND. A food-truck event would be great, as it could also raise awareness of the importance of maintaining your appetite when living with MND," Dr Steyn said.

The couple hope their research will lead to a clinical trial that will help people with MND maintain a healthy appetite.

To support MND research, email [med.advancement@uq.edu.au](mailto:med.advancement@uq.edu.au)

# Moving mountains in *medicine*

by Simone Moyle

*Dr Bonning and team on the summit of Aconcagua in Argentina.*

A few years ago, leading a group on a mountaineering trip to Argentina, Dr Michael Bonning took a photo of the curved horizon in the distance with the mountains peeking through a layer of cloud.

Although he doesn't remember taking the photo, due to sheer exhaustion after summiting the mountain, the memento is a reminder of the beauty and joy of a simple moment, the challenge of the journey paying off.

Leader, advocate, researcher and clinician, UQ Distinguished Young Alumni for 2020 Dr Michael Bonning has never shied away from a challenge during a diverse career that's so far taken him from Brisbane to the top of the world, literally.

Chair of the Australian Medical Association NSW (AMA NSW), inaugural Director of the Doctors Health Service and a former Director of Beyond Blue as well as being a general practitioner, Dr Bonning's interest in advocacy started in his first year studying medicine at The University of Queensland.

"As a first-year medical student, I applied to the inaugural Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) Leadership Development Seminar.

"Inspired by what I saw at the conference, I immediately decided I wanted to run AMSA one day," Dr Bonning recalls.



*Dr Michael Bonning*

Following one failed attempt to get there, Dr Bonning became AMSA president in 2008, which marked both the culmination of his university advocacy career and the start of his involvement in medico-politics.

Realising that he could make an impact by working as a GP and applying patient experiences to achieve the best in healthcare, Dr Bonning adopted an evidence-based approach to inform policy and political discourse.

"Before studying medicine, I was lucky enough to have had exposure to research during my undergraduate and honours years as a science student. The opportunity to deep dive into a specific area and influence outcomes based on the generation of new knowledge was, and continues to be, very appealing.

"I strongly believe that through advocacy and leadership we should use evidence to support our actions and actively work in the interests of those whose voices are less heard," Dr Bonning says.

Dr Bonning's passion for pushing physical boundaries, and his thirst for adventure have been another constant theme in his career.

As a former Medical Officer in the Royal Australian Navy, and as a current Chief Medical Officer for Inspired Adventures, Dr Bonning has experienced several overseas deployments.

"In this role, I'm able to combine my love for the great outdoors with the practical problem of solving medical issues in remote locations.

"I really enjoy helping people achieve trekking goals they never imagined possible, keeping them safe during the experience, and doing it all while exploring some of the most beautiful parts of the world," Dr Bonning smiles.

Recognising the privilege he's enjoyed throughout his life, Dr Bonning, with others from his graduating year, is now giving back, through an annual medical school bursary in paediatrics.

"The Dr Michael Reading Prize is named for one of our medical school colleagues who died suddenly. As a cohort, we recognise the opportunities we have had up to this point and, through philanthropy, are seeking to expand opportunities for others," he says.

Dr Bonning credits a number of mentors who have helped guide him to where he is today, including UQ Professor John Pearn, Karen Worthington and former AMSA presidents Dr Dror Maor and Dr Rob Mitchell.

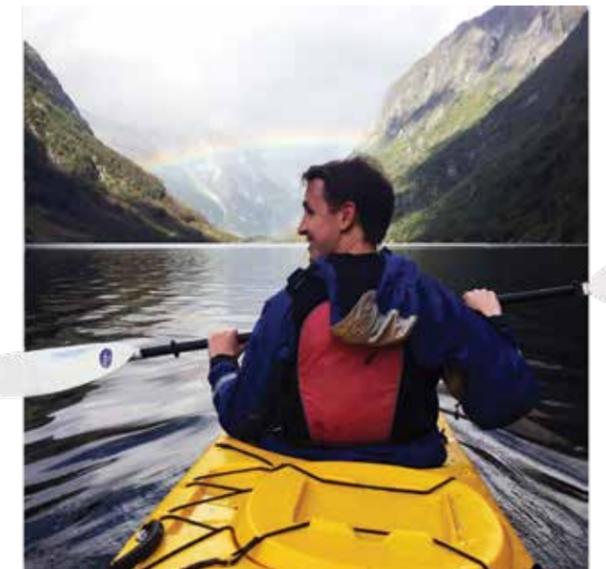
"Each of these people, and many, many others, have really inspired and encouraged me as they've always cared about looking after those around them. My life is forever better for knowing them," Dr Bonning muses.

So what's the next mountain to scale for Dr Bonning? Continuing his work to improve Australia's healthcare system.

"I still haven't lost the enthusiasm and idealism I had back when I was that optimistic first-year medical student.

"Our healthcare system needs to take its next steps very carefully. In my opinion, the current system is not geared towards helping people live longer and healthier lives with chronic disease. An ongoing shift in the funding and delivery models for healthcare needs to incentivise quality in clinical outcomes and prevention.

"We need to recognise, quantify and promote value in our health system, where we reduce care that has limited evidence or does not produce good results, and focus on the best evidence-based outcomes," he says.



*Dr Bonning kayaking the fjords in Norway near Voss and Bergen.*

# Caring during COVID

By Simone Moyle

2020 has been a challenging year for many of us, but fourth-year UQ medical student Sikta Samantray hasn't ever been one to let a hurdle like a pandemic get in her way.



Fourth-year UQ medical student Sikta Samantray.



Orthopaedic surgeon Dr Gerald Yeo and Sikta Samantray at the Prince Charles Hospital.



While her Northside Clinical Unit placement was put on hold for a month during the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak, Ms Samantray made the most of some rare downtime to put together care packages for frontline staff at the Prince Charles Hospital.

"I saw how hard my preceptors and other frontliners around me were working, so I decided to cold call a number of companies who generously donated items such as fragrances, hand cream and tea for me to distribute at the hospital as a token of my appreciation.

"It was extremely humbling to see how eager companies were to jump on board, and really demonstrated how wonderful things can be achieved when people work together for the greater good," she says.

This altruistic gesture is just one example of Ms Samantray's kind nature, which was one of the catalysts for her to pursue a career in medicine and help make a difference in people's lives.

"Providing happiness to others makes my heart sing. I love it when I see tangible positive change from my actions, which is why I find medicine so rewarding. Every interaction with patients brings me a sense of joy, knowing I am changing their life for the better," she says.

Born in Norway and spending her formative years in the Middle East and Canada before moving to Australia to study medicine at UQ, Ms Samantray's diverse upbringing and steadfast family support have helped shape her worldview.

"My travels have provided me with immense perspective. I have so much appreciation for different cultures and I know what makes people tick.

"As a child, I loved to be curious and immerse myself in any novel opportunity that came my way: from classical dancing to ice skating to more intellectual pursuits, which I think influenced me to become a person who seeks new opportunities, remains curious and has an open mind.

"My parents have also sacrificed a lot to help me pursue my dreams and I am forever indebted to them for their support and love," she says.

For Ms Samantray, the decision to move halfway across the world to study at UQ was a dream come true, following in the footsteps of a close family friend who had done the same.

"Relocating to Australia to study medicine at UQ has been the best decision of my life and has helped me grow so much as a person. It may sound clichéd, but living alone has allowed me to become independent, work towards passion projects and find myself.

As for what's next for Ms Samantray?

"I start my internship at Rockhampton Hospital in January. I'm particularly looking forward to continuing to be inspired by passionate people who are working towards something with determination, fire, and creativity.

"Overall, I am hoping 2021 holds more kindness, humility, and health for everyone."

# The SHOW must go on!

By Simone Moyle with Rebekah Gracias, Veronica Ho, Hannah Joy Sazon, Aditya Suresh, Aude Unternahrer

When COVID-19 restrictions were put in place earlier this year, it seemed likely that the curtain would go down on the annual University of Queensland Medical Society (UQMS) Med Revue.



It's a plot that could have been ripped directly from the show's script, which tells of the struggles of medical school in a performance packed with comedy, musical numbers and obscure medical jokes, and starring a talented cast and crew of med students.

However, through tenacity, adaptability and a dose of good humour, Med Revue co-convenors Rebekah Gracias, Veronica Ho, Hannah Joy Sazon, Aditya Suresh, and Aude Unternahrer, who are all studying the UQ Doctor of Medicine program, managed to turn tragedy into triumph.

"The only thing certain about our show was uncertainty. Due to the ever-changing restrictions, we had to play the entire process by ear, week-to-week," they said.

Rebekah, Veronica, Hannah, Aditya and Aude began their Med Revue journey post-exams in November last year, with no idea of the challenges that would lie ahead.

It's a journey that began with writers' meetings, where medical students had the opportunity to pitch songs, skits and videos to be

included in the show, followed by arranging the musical numbers.

Auditions were then held for actors, singers and dancers, as well as an open casting call for the ensemble dancers and choir. Then, COVID-19 hit.

"In May we held our auditions, callbacks and our first table-read over Zoom. Rehearsals usually start in June, but this year it was July before some restrictions had eased and we were able to hold rehearsals in person.

"The rehearsal process was a huge challenge; we went from large choir and dance rehearsals of more than 40 medical students to very small group rehearsals of just 10 people, at the drop of a hat.

"But the opportunity to socialise in a COVID-safe way in rehearsals in a year when so many events had to be cancelled gave our cast and crew something to look forward to and stay positive about," they said.

For the first time, the show, which usually takes to the stage before a live audience in mid-August at St Lucia's Schonell Theatre, instead had to be filmed, scene by scene, at the Schonell and the Brisbane Arts Theatre in Paddington, in the hopes that a screening could be hosted at a later date.

"We were absolutely devastated that we couldn't hold a live show. But we're still so incredibly grateful that we managed to film our show instead. None of this would have been possible without the support of our cast and crew, the theatres, and UQMS.

"Despite all the uncertainty and logistical roadblocks, the positivity of our cast and crew was so incredibly uplifting. They gave us the drive to try our hardest to showcase everyone's work and keep the Med Revue dream alive.

"We still hope to hold a screening of Med Revue should government restrictions permit us to do so," they said.

The 2020 Med Revue co-convenors said getting involved was a great way for med students to get to know each other and complement their studies with a more creative pursuit. The experience will remain one of their fondest memories of medical school.

"Med Revue has been an incredible opportunity to work with other creatively minded students and has created tight-knit bonds that will last throughout medical school and beyond.

"We have all experienced moments on the wards where Med Revue has come up in conversation with UQ graduates who still remember the jokes and friends they made during their years participating in the Revue.

"Even if our times working on the show didn't overlap, it becomes a shared experience and fosters a sense of community, with many memories of late nights at rehearsals and last-minute line memorisations," they said.

As Rebekah, Veronica, Hannah, Aditya and Aude embark on the next step of their careers to become junior doctors in Australia and the United States, what advice do they have for the convenors, cast and crew of the 2021 Med Revue?

"Roll with the punches and enjoy the journey! Med Revue is a chaotic beast that requires communication, patience, and careful organisation to wrangle. It's a hugely rewarding process to be a part of and an amazing feat to pull off every year," they said.

Photo credit: Frank Lee

# Honouring our history, investing in our future

## 2021 reunions

We look forward to assisting the MBBS classes of 1971, 1981, 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2011 to celebrate milestone reunions throughout 2021. Your Faculty is here to help you reconnect with colleagues and friends and make your reunion a memorable celebration.

Contact [med.alumni@uq.edu.au](mailto:med.alumni@uq.edu.au) for more formation about your upcoming reunion.

## Mentor students and young alumni

Share your expertise by mentoring students and young alumni as they establish their careers in medicine and health by signing up for UQ's new A2A (Alumni to Alumni) platform and PAN (Personal Advisor Network) mentoring program.

Email [med.alumni@uq.edu.au](mailto:med.alumni@uq.edu.au) for more information.



The Mayne Medical School, Herston in 1941.

## A history built upon giving

Eighty years ago, Dr James and Mary Emelia Mayne, through gifts in their wills, left significant funds to maintain the Medical School and support its students and its research. Today, our Faculty donors continue to support students and researchers with the same goal in mind - to create a community of exceptional health professionals and to further world-renowned medical discoveries from here in Brisbane.



Professor Ian Gough AM, Dr Ruth Gough and student Shannon Baker.

## Helping the next generation

Recently, UQ medical student Shannon Baker and UQ alumni and philanthropic supporters, Professor Ian and Dr Ruth Gough, met at the Herston campus. Shannon is one of five student scholarship recipients the Goughs have supported in recent years. Committed to furthering educational opportunities, the Goughs created two Create Change Scholarships and employed the UQ match to double their donations. Through the generosity of donors like the Goughs, many more students will be able to build their dream careers.

## Creating change

Mrs Elva Emmerson, who passed away earlier this year, set up a Create Change Scholarship to honour her husband, Emeritus Professor Bryan Emmerson AO. Mrs Emmerson is pictured here visiting the refurbished Mayne Medical Building with her sons, Professors Brett and Stephen Emmerson.



## Looking forward, looking back

Students enjoying sports day in 2018 and the MBBS Class of 1971 on the Herston Campus.

## Got feedback?

Have your say about the content produced for you, our medical alumni and professional community!

If you have an idea for a story or know of an interesting colleague the Faculty should know more about, please get in touch with [med.alumni@uq.edu.au](mailto:med.alumni@uq.edu.au).



Is it time for your next reunion? The MBBS Class of 1968 (pictured at their Graduation Dinner) celebrated their 50 Year Reunion in 2018.

# Scoring a *CENTURY*

By Georgina Hilder

*It is not the young man who should be considered fortunate, but the old man who has lived well – Epicurus*

Physical distancing restrictions didn't stop Henry Malcolm Whyte from celebrating his 100th birthday in October.

The last-standing 1944 University of Queensland Medicine graduate hosted a Zoom birthday party attended by 200 guests from around the world, who shared stories, photos and speeches before conducting a mass cake and candle blow-out. Everyone brought their own cake and candles to the virtual celebration.

"It was a hoot!" he says.

"The Guinness World Record for a mass candle blow-out was 1,700 people, so we couldn't compete," Dr Whyte chuckled.

At the age of 100, Dr Whyte possesses the spirit and curiosity of someone a quarter of his age.

"I still do my own cooking. I like Asian food the most. Luckily, I still drive a car too, so I do get around a bit," he says.

Born in India in 1920 to Australian Protestant missionaries, Dr Whyte's calling to be a doctor was strong. He graduated from UQ as the top student with a university medal for outstanding academic performance and a Rhodes Scholarship.

Upon graduation he joined the Army and served in Borneo and the Celebes, before returning home to be a Senior Lecturer in Physiology at UQ. Then in 1947 he went with his wife and son to take up his Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford University, where he gained a PhD, won membership of the Royal College of Physicians and added a second child to his family.

In 1977, Dr Whyte had a calling. Just before his 40th birthday, his Sydney Hospital team were testing Australia's first dialysis machine. Since people with kidney failure were too sick to be tested on, Dr Whyte used healthy volunteers who ate nothing, or half their normal food intake, to test kidney recovery optimisation. He was one of the volunteers.

"The technology was new so when people heard about it, we were flooded with requests from all over Australia from people with bad kidneys," he says.

"The night after your intermittent starvation, you become hyperactive, and I had this epiphany that I needed to do more for my community.

"The next day I went to the Sydney City Mission and asked the superintendent if there was anything I could do. He said he'd been

praying for a doctor, so I joined the board and helped them turn the soup kitchen into a rehabilitation service for homeless men. It was amazing.

"People these days have multiple careers, but it wasn't so common back then. I had an itch to do something different.

"That night was a night of enlightenment that significantly changed the rest of my life."

Dr Whyte's new-found community focus saw him coordinate the Alcohol and Drug Dependence Unit within the ACT Health Commission, working closely with the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul Society, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Alanon.

From there he became a consultant to the Northern Territory Department of Health, and became active in the Red Cross Blood Bank, the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service, the Canberra Marriage Counselling Service, Lifeline Canberra, and the Ethics Committee of the Australian Institute of Health.

"One of my biggest achievements was setting up Lifeline. Now with the pandemic, Lifeline is promoted on television every night. It's such an important service," he says.

"Some people would say to me 'oh geez, that must be incredibly sombre work,' but we had so much fun seeing people recover and blossom."

Reflecting on his career, Dr Whyte says the best part about his work has always been lifting others up.

"My gift is to help people shine," he says.

"I loved what I did. That's so important."

In retirement, Dr Whyte says he's having the time of his life. As a Quaker, he enjoys pondering philosophy, cosmology, history and spirituality in the form of poetry.

"I like to write 'selfies', which are introspective pieces of writing, just for myself, like this one:

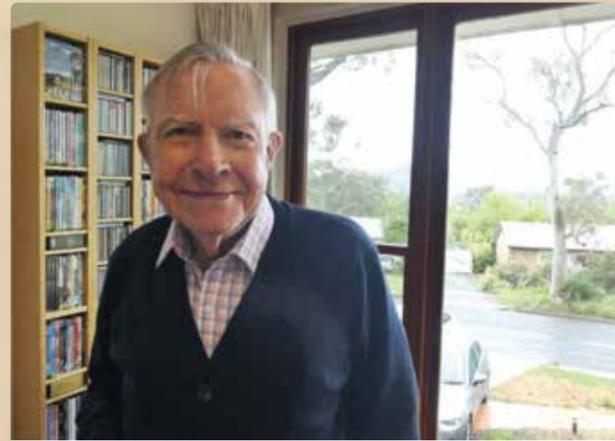
*I have lived my whole life learning how to live. As a slow learner I need a very long life. My studentship is by no means finished. – Dr Whyte*

"On that note, I'm looking forward to the next birthday!" he says.

Our sincere thanks to Christine Moore for providing the accompanying images.



Dr Whyte as a researcher in Papua New Guinea.



Dr Malcolm Whyte on his 100th birthday, October 2020.



Dr Whyte (second from left) at a Scout jamboree Sydney, 1939/40.



Dr Whyte off to be capped, Oxford, 1951.



Dr Whyte at an ANZAC Day Parade.



Dr Whyte (front row, second from left), Sydney Hospital in the 1950s.

# Advancing MEDICINE and Health

By Angie Trivisonno

Marla Edwards always arrives before she enters a room. Her joyfulness, melodic voice and penchant for fun are so infectious as she walks the grand hallways of the Mayne Medical Building.

"My house was always filled with music and science books," she says.

It's clear performance was anything but staged in the Edwards household, rather, it came naturally to all – including Ms Edwards.

"I remember receiving the Year 12 prize for School Spirit at Brisbane Girls Grammar School (BGGGS), where I attended," Ms Edwards recalls.

"I also ran the school radio, studied piano, was a young mezzo-soprano studying under the late Margaretta Elkins AM and Lauris Elms AM OBE, and sang at school building openings including the Gehrman Theatre.

"Time may have passed, but I haven't changed a bit," Ms Edwards says.

Ms Edwards is still as vivacious as ever and keen to perform in her new role as Director of Advancement, Medicine and Health, with The University of Queensland.

"I lead a UQ strategy to support advancement collaboration across the Faculties of Medicine, Health and Behavioural Sciences, and the Queensland Brain Institute.

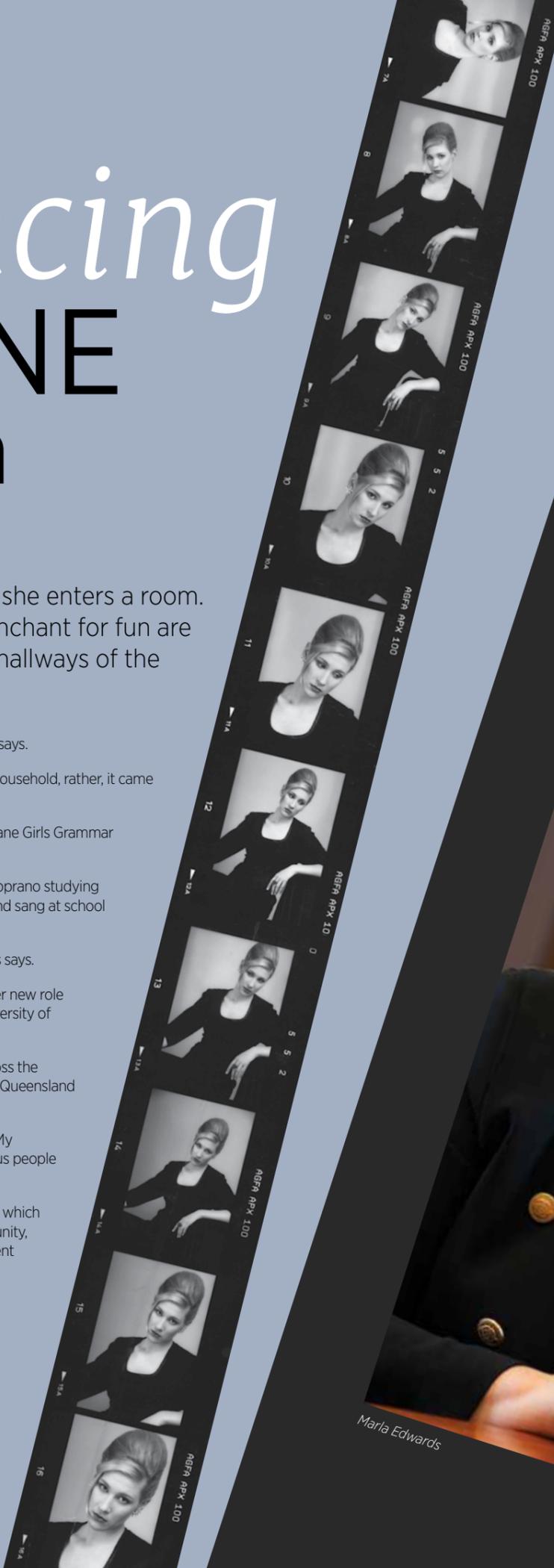
"It's such a joy supporting those around me to achieve success. My colleagues are the most talented, brilliant, sincere and courageous people that I have met," Ms Edwards says.

"I'm thrilled about what we are creating together, and the way in which we're contributing to achieving tangible positives for our community, such as recognising diversity and supporting collective enrichment through shared activities and meaning.

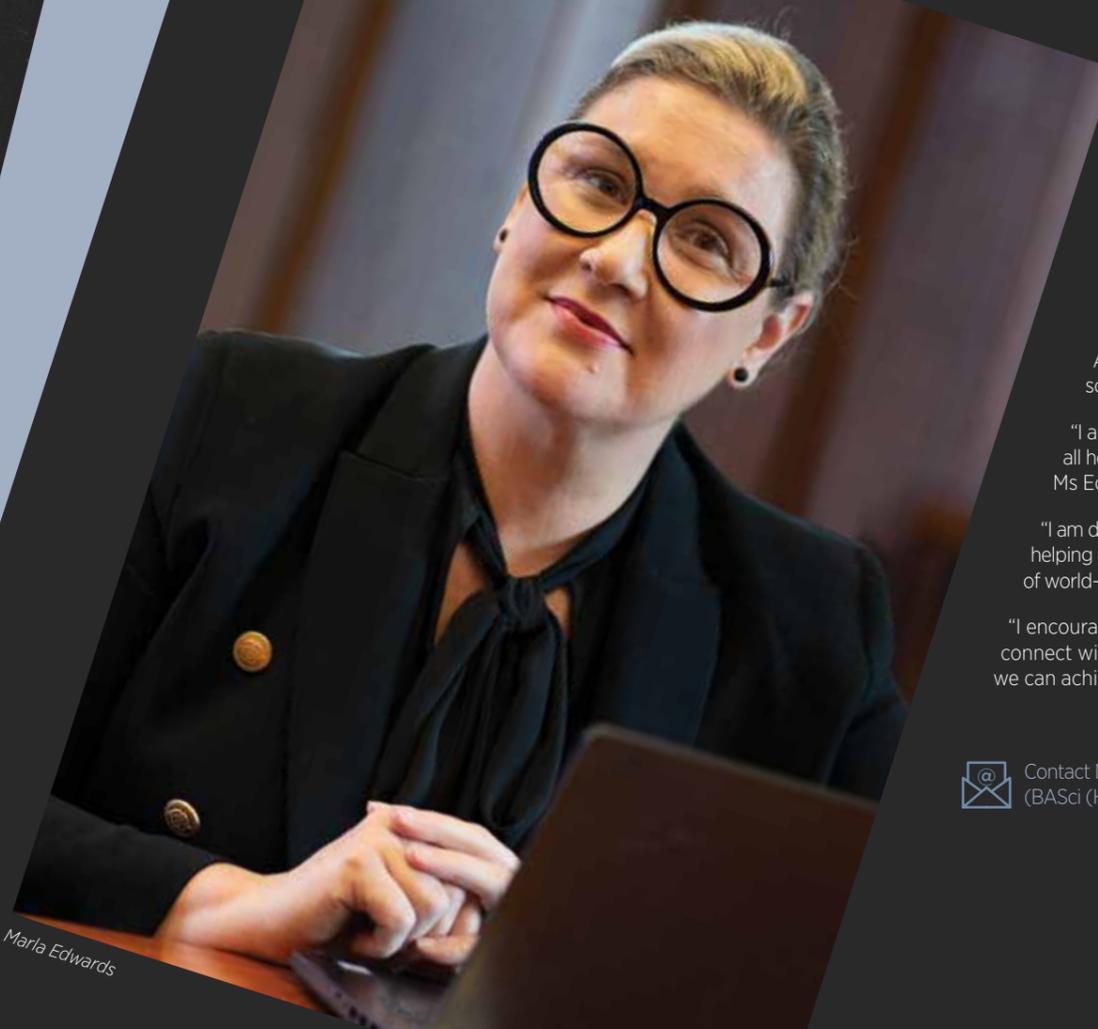
"I'm excited to be working with our Indigenous leaders on UQ Indigenous Health strategies to create real impacts for local communities and promote shared knowledge through various pathways, including global Indigenous communities.

"And, it's a privilege to work alongside world-leading experts in health and science. I'm very passionate about supporting our researchers to solve the world's greatest health challenges," Ms Edwards says.

*Marla sings Mahler.*



*Marla Edwards during her performing days.*



*Marla Edwards*

"The cumulative impact of our collaborative work is what enables UQ to make a powerful contribution to improving the health and wellbeing of communities, so that we may all live longer and stronger together."

Ms Edwards draws on past experiences and teachers to paint a picture of what the future could be.

"I've worked with so many wonderful people from diverse backgrounds during my international career. I want to share my learnings with other UQ staff and supporters in ways that achieve shared success."

Other great learnings have come from Marla's grandmother and mother who instilled strong values in her – her greatest gifts – and several executive women who mentored her very early in her career and still remain in contact with her today.

"Dr Judith Hancock AM and the teachers at BGGGS supported my creative vocal aspirations, and my voice teachers taught me how to lead and live a disciplined life with grace, and how to communicate with an audience, and my gorgeous girlfriends showed me the power of intelligence and tenacity when juggling work and family around so many competing priorities.

"These foundations have set the standard for how I live, work and view the world today. Through unwavering discipline, focus, integrity, kindness, generosity and authenticity, I believe we all can create a world that inspires hope in others and leads to a better place for all."

An example of this inspiring ethic is the work being done by UQ scientists to develop a COVID-19 vaccine.

"I am so proud of our scientists and the work they are doing to keep us all healthy, protected and safe, and resume a more familiar way of life," Ms Edwards explains.

"I am dedicating my efforts to searching for people who are interested in helping us achieve this 'ultimate goal', and to developing the next generation of world-class researchers and clinicians in our Centres of Excellence.

"I encourage anyone interested in helping to create a better world to connect with me now so that we may go on this journey together. What we can achieve together is far more than we can ever achieve alone."

Contact Marla Edwards, Director of Advancement, Medicine and Health, (BASci (Hons), MBA(Exec), CFRE) at [med.advancement@uq.edu.au](mailto:med.advancement@uq.edu.au).

# Going viral: from vet to immunologist

By Kirsten Dodd

Growing up in Toowoomba surrounded by horses, cattle, and chickens, a young Gabrielle Belz dreamed of becoming a vet.



Professor Gabrielle Belz

It wasn't long before her love of animals brought her to The University of Queensland for the first, but not the last, time.

"Initially I came to UQ to do my veterinary degree. It was the only place in the state to do this. At the time it seemed that it was just a course I wanted to do but in retrospect, many aspects were ahead of their time.

"I learned from lecturers like Trevor Heath and Mike Rex, who inspired talented veterinary students to pursue veterinary studies and research and to extend themselves. I later learned that Nobel Prize winner and Laureate Professor Peter Doherty was also a vet from the school when I trained with him in Memphis."

Now Chair in Immunology at University of Queensland Diamantina Institute, Professor Belz is candid about her 'accidental' journey from being a vet to becoming a viral and molecular immunologist.

"I guess you could say that my career has taken some unexpected turns. We did immunology in the vet course but, like most vet students, I hadn't prioritised this subject as it wasn't necessary for testing cattle for pregnancies or performing animal surgery.

"I was, however, really interested in viruses, and immunology was at the time an incidental accompaniment. Little did I know I would end up in the lab of the person who discovered MHC Class I restriction!" says Belz.

"During my postdoc, I used to do month-long stints at a friend's veterinary practice in Tanunda, South Australia. At the time, I didn't intend to stay in research - I was anticipating going to Cornell to do a large animal medicine and surgery specialty, but there was a six-month difference in timing for applications.

"I ended up getting a fellowship to go to an immunology lab in Canada, but I had been speaking with Peter Doherty and before I knew it I found myself in Tennessee doing viral immunology in his lab.

"I got interested in the work and doing experiments and the experience of moving around the world. My career in immunology evolved from there," says Belz.

After her stint in the USA, Belz returned to Australia and took up a position at The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research (WEHI) in Melbourne.

It was here that her career flourished, and her love of cycling developed into what she calls 'a reasonably obsessive pastime.'

"I do a lot of cycling and racing - and believe the correct number of bikes is n+1," she laughs.

"I love the fresh air and exercise, and the friends I've made through cycling. These have all proven to be integral to my life, especially during this year's lockdown.

"My cycling club is in Melbourne and even though I'm now based in Queensland, we have all stayed connected and meet regularly to ride on one of the online cycling platforms. This has given us a way to check in on people during what's been a tough year for many," says Belz.

So, just what was it that attracted Belz to return to her home state and take up her role at UQDI?

"I am motivated by challenging myself, discovery, and vibrant discussions with emerging scientists, and I could see how each of these elements presented themselves in the position at UQDI.

"It's given me the chance to progress my research amongst key leaders in related areas while mentoring and inspiring the next generation of scientists. It has also meant for the first time I could be a bit closer to my family," she says.

A country girl at heart, Belz is looking forward to spending Christmas with her family, enjoying some of the simpler things in life.

"Every year we are together is special but maybe we will now have time this year to make the special Christmas cake and pudding," she smiles.

Perhaps there'll be a Christmas bike ride, too.

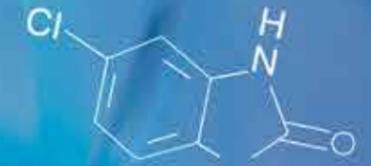


Professor Belz in the velodrome.



# Clinician Scientist Track (MD-PhD program) – 10 years on

By Angie Trivisonno



The UQ Clinician Scientist Track (CST) program is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. To mark the occasion, we caught up with some of our past MD-PhD students to find out where they are now on their medical journey.

The CST program allows eligible students to incorporate a Higher Degree by Research (HDR), either a PhD or an MPhil (equivalent to a Research Master's Degree (MSc)) integrated with the MD degree via an intercalated model; meaning students interrupt their MD degree to do full-time PhD or MPhil research, and then return to complete their MD and graduate with an MD-PhD or MD-MPhil.

## Dr Casey Linton

### Q: What is your current position?

I completed my MBBS/PhD in 2017, with a PhD in neuroscience with the Queensland Brain Institute. I studied mechanisms of nerve regeneration in the laboratory of Professor Massimo Hilliard, using the nematode *C. elegans* as a model organism. I have since continued clinical work as a doctor, and am currently training as a physician at Cairns Hospital.

### Q: What do you want to do in the future?

My work in neuroscience has inspired me to pursue a career as a neurologist in the years ahead.



### Q: What brought you to UQ, and how has it helped shape your life?

My time at UQ actually began with the Australian Brain Bee Challenge, a neuroscience competition for high school students. I was very fortunate to win the Queensland Brain Bee in 2008, which led me to continue as a researcher at QBI and complete my studies at UQ. Without a doubt, UQ has shaped my life in unexpected but delightful ways - apart from inspiring my interest in neurology, I also met my fiancé at UQ when we were both medical students!

### Q: How has the Clinician Scientist Track enabled you to contribute to medical discovery?

Working in the Hilliard laboratory, I was part of a team that is characterising a novel means of nerve repair. I am excited to see this work translated to the clinical setting, as it could have a profound impact on how we treat nerve and spinal cord injuries. With the skill set I developed during my PhD, combined with my medical training, I feel well placed to continue research as a neurologist.

### Q: What is your greatest gift?

I am incredibly grateful for the time I spent in research at the Queensland Brain Institute. It was a real gift to be a part of such a nurturing research environment.

### Q: How have you remained positive during 2020, a challenging year for all Australians?

My fiancé and I had hoped to be married in New Zealand this year, but sadly we have had to postpone our wedding. Staying positive has not been easy, and COVID-19 is not far from the minds of most healthcare workers. For me, enjoying time outside of work has been important. We used our wedding fund to buy a four-wheel drive and went camping around Far North Queensland, an experience I highly recommend!

### Q: What gives you the greatest joy?

Currently, I take great joy as a doctor from my interactions with patients. Doctors have the important job of not only diagnosing and managing patients correctly, but also of communicating with them and their families. It is a real artform, and it is so satisfying to see it done well.

Nothing keeps me more focused on the present than my dog, Smokey. Without exception, he greets me with enthusiasm every time I come home from work. It is hard to dwell on the challenges of the day in the face of such relentless affection!

### Q: What do you love most about summer/Christmas?

Christmas is one of the rare times that we set aside to relax and regroup. I love to visit my family on the Gold Coast and go surfing on Christmas Day with my Dad. It is a time to reconnect with family and look forward to the year ahead.



## Dr Dylan Flaws

### Q: What is your current position?

I'm a psychiatry advanced trainee at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital. I'm completing an advanced training certificate in Consultation Liaison Psychiatry and working in the older person's outreach team. My current job involves providing psychiatric care to people aged over 67 years by visiting them in their home, or aged care facility.

### Q: What do you want to do in the future?

I'm due to complete my training in February 2021, and I really want to focus on providing psychiatric support to people who've survived a severe illness or injury. My ideal career would involve meeting these patients as they arrive in ICU and providing continuity of care as a part of a multidisciplinary team as they step down to the wards, and then following up with them as they resume their lives after discharge.

### Q: What brought you to UQ, and how has it helped shape your life?

It's a little embarrassing, but I chose UQ based on a computer algorithm. I set up a code in excel that calculated my probability of getting into each Australian university available with my GPA, GAMSAT score etc, and UQ had the highest odds.

### Q: How has the Clinician Scientist Track enabled you to contribute to medical discovery?

My PhD was on chest pain (I hadn't decided on psychiatry that early). I tried to develop a decision-support algorithm that would facilitate an accelerated diagnostic protocol for

chest pain presentations in emergency. The outcome was the EDACS Score, which identified ~50 per cent of patients could be safely discharged considerably earlier than standard practice. It's now being used throughout New Zealand, in at least 27 hospitals in USA, and somewhere in Iran. It was also recommended as the preferred process in India.

Since finishing my PhD, I've been applying skills developed in other areas of medicine, including looking at delirium, and working with a multidisciplinary team to redesign the ICU environment to improve recovery.

### Q: What is your greatest gift?

I think it's a sincere privilege to be working as a clinician, especially in psychiatry. University may teach you medicine, but it's your patients who will make you a doctor. In a society that often feels increasingly insular, the clinician-patient relationship allows me to step outside my own social bubble and get to know people on a deep level I would have never met any other way. I've interviewed judges and lawyers, murderers and thieves, and people of every ethnicity and belief. People have told me parts of their lives they haven't even told their children.

### Q: How have you remained positive during 2020, a challenging year for all Australians?

When COVID-19 first loomed over Australia, much of my research came to a halt. It was a time where one could easily feel powerless. At the same time, many of my critical care colleagues were also feeling quite distressed and reaching out to their Mental Health colleagues for support. I decided to reapply my resources to set up support for them because if we lose the frontline, we'll lose the fight. After doing some research and consulting a broad range of stakeholders, and with support from Professor Brett Emmerson and Metro North executives, we managed to set up a psychiatrist-run peer-support hotline for our critical care SMOs which is still running today.

### Q: What gives you the greatest joy?

Making things better for people. I remember the first time I saved someone's life, and it was as a third-year medical student. He was having a heart attack, and they nearly sent him home. Now he's out there somewhere... still breathing because I had a bad feeling about him and asked to do an ECG "for my own learning".

### Q: What do you love most about summer/Christmas?

I've always loved the warmth of summer, and hated frosty mornings in Christchurch and Dunedin. I also love that people endeavour to love their fellow man around Christmas. You really notice it in Psychiatry, because even though it can be a time of sadness for some people, people often present less because family and other organisations are there for them.

# Clinician Scientist Track (MD-PhD program) – 10 years on



Dr Monica Ng

**Q: What is your current position?**

I'm currently a first-year renal advanced trainee based at Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, as well as Adjunct Research Fellow at the Institute of Molecular Biosciences, Visiting Fellow at the Conjoint Kidney Research Laboratory and lecturer at the UQ School of Clinical Medicine.

In my current clinical role, I'm training in the field of kidney medicine, nephrology, which involves assessing and managing patients with various kidney diseases in clinic and dialysis unit and on the ward. In my non-clinical time, I actively participate in translational research projects. As a lecturer, I tutor medical students via bedside teaching and clinical reasoning sessions.

**Q: What do you want to do in the future?**

I'd like to subspecialise in glomerular kidney diseases as this fits in well with my previous experience with vascular model design. As a clinical scientist, I look forward to bringing questions/ideas/inspiration from the clinic for exploration in the laboratory and vice versa.

**Q: What brought you to UQ, and how has it helped shape your life?**

High-quality courses and access to world-class research programs. UQ also had the added benefit of being near my family. The flexibility of courses at UQ has enabled me to pursue interests and develop skills in both clinical and research spheres.

**Q: How has the Clinician Scientist Track enabled you to contribute to medical discovery?**

The Clinician Scientist Track enabled me to develop skills in clinical and medical research. During my PhD, I found that packed red blood cells stored for longer than 30 days were associated with increased mortality when compared with packed red blood cells stored for less than 10 days in selected populations. I also designed an artificial blood vessel model and used it to study adverse transfusion reactions in the laboratory. These days I'm working towards identifying why people develop glomerular kidney diseases and engineering treatments that prevent progression to end-stage kidney disease.

**Q: What is your greatest gift?**

My greatest gift is the people around me whom generously provide support and sympathetic ears and laugh at my terrible jokes.

**Q: How have you remained positive during 2020, a challenging year for all Australians?**

I spend time in-person or virtually with family and friends. Additionally, I focus on things that I am grateful for – great family and friends, supportive colleagues and good health.

**Q: What gives you the greatest joy?**

Solving problems – be it in clinic when it involves coming up with an individualised treatment plan, in the lab when I'm trying to avoid an explosion, or on the water when I'm preventing my kayak from capsizing in a storm! There is nothing quite like the satisfaction from overcoming a challenge!

**Q: What do you love most about summer/Christmas?**

The best thing about Christmas in Australia is summer, and the best thing about summer is the opportunity to enjoy lots of water sports such as kayaking and swimming. Queensland is one of the best places for it with so many amazing creeks, swimming holes and beaches!

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# Drumming to her own BEAT

By Kirsten Dodd

On Christmas Day when many Aussie will be tucking into seafood and pavlova, Yukiko Ezure will be celebrating in the traditional Japanese way – by eating KFC and a strawberry shortcake.

"I grew up in Japan and for us Christmas is celebrated as a time to spread happiness and give children presents – it's traditionally not a religious holiday in our culture.

"I belong to a Japanese music circle and I play drums in a band that plays J-pop (Japanese pop music), so perhaps we'll have a jam session to celebrate this Christmas," she says.

A talented musician, Ms Ezure is currently undertaking her PhD in Methodological Epidemiology, while working as a casual lab research assistant at the UQ Centre for Clinical Research.

"My PhD project is about using modern epidemiological methods to estimate causality. Causality is important for improving clinical decision-making. I'm aiming to utilise causal inference to enhance the quality of future infectious disease research and clinical decision making," she says.

When she's not working on her PhD or in the lab, Ms Ezure can be found tutoring students in UQ's School of Public Health and in the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance and Retention program, where she supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

"I studied my Master of Epidemiology at UQ, and throughout my studies I enjoyed facilitating active discussions, motivating other group members, and also learned how to explain complex ideas in a simplified manner.

"Based on my personal experiences, I also have a strong awareness of cross-cultural differences. I wanted to utilise these skills to help other students, so I became a tutor.

"I find tutoring very rewarding – I love working with students and hearing about their passion for their studies – but at the moment my most important priority is progressing my PhD," she says.

So, just how did Ms Ezure go from working in medical administration in Japan to studying a PhD halfway across the world in Brisbane?

"After my divorce, I immigrated to Australia with my two small children. I like to find a chance to change in any difficult situation, and I decided to take a risk and pursue something I'm passionate about – a career in health.

"I guess you could say I listened to my heart and chose to dance to the beat of my own drum," she laughs.

Such a positive outlook on life has served Ms Ezure well and she agrees that she's drawn on her resilience and positivity to get her through what has been a difficult year for many.

"I have a low threshold in feeling joy – there really is just so much to be happy about and thankful for.

"When you're feeling stuck, you just need to look for an opportunity for change and see where it takes you," she says.

"For example, this year, because of lockdown I couldn't attend music jam sessions. So we created a remote session platform and collaborated with music jam group members. This platform allowed us to connect with members who went back to Japan, and together we have great fun!"

Sometimes it really is the smallest things that make the biggest difference.



Yukiko Ezure plays drums in a band that plays J-pop (Japanese pop music).



Yukiko Ezure is currently undertaking her PhD in Methodological Epidemiology.

Consider  
a gift in  
your will

## A gift in your will can advance health research and educational excellence

Dr James Mayne and his sister Miss Mary Emelia Mayne made gifts in their wills that laid the foundation for UQ's medical program as well as the establishment of UQ's Brisbane campuses. In this, the 80th anniversary of the Mayne Estate, we pay special tribute to the Maynes' visionary generosity that continues to benefit hundreds of UQ medical students, staff and researchers annually.

A gift in your will in support of the next generation of medical practitioners and researchers advances the issues you care about and ensures a healthier future for Australians and people around the world.

To find out more, please contact our Advancement team: [med.advancement@uq.edu.au](mailto:med.advancement@uq.edu.au)

