You will read about many achievements of SVI staff in this newsletter. People are the real strength of any organisation, and here at SVI we are lucky to have some of the best.

A recent achievement in our Diabetes and Immunology Unit is the appointment of Associate Professor Helen Thomas as a Senior Research Fellow in the most recent National Health and Medical Research Council grant round. The Fellowship scheme supports the salaries of the elite in Australian medical research. The extremely competitive appointment process is repeated every 5 years, with an opportunity for promotion within the system.

As well as running a highly successful program aiming at understanding how beta cells are killed in both type 1 and type 2 diabetes, Helen has a number of other significant strings to her bow. One is her major contribution to the Tom Mandel Islet Transplant Program, which could not have achieved its success without her knowledge and skill.

SVI has six NHMRC Fellows, who are the engine-room of SVI’s research. There is a lot of concern in the sector about women in the research workforce, especially about their promotion to, and retention in, the upper ranks. We are very proud that exactly half of our Fellows at SVI are young women, who run their successful research careers alongside that of their young families.

Of course the best is yet to come, and the precious 5 year security of Helen’s salary will allow her to continue to contribute to the important health problems of diabetes.

As the year comes to a close, we thank you for your valuable support in 2012, which helps the work of outstanding researchers like Helen. We wish you and your families a happy holiday season and look forward to continuing the journey of discovery with you in the year to come.
Bright Young Things

Students are an integral part of the fabric of any medical research institute, and much energy is spent trying to attract the brightest students and giving them the best environment within which to fulfill their promise. A recent spate of awards for SVI students shows that this effort is paying off.

PhD student David Ascher has been awarded two prestigious travelling Fellowships, the Churchill and the Victoria Fellowships. These will allow David to continue his research overseas.

PhD students from the Bone Cell Biology and Disease Unit, Farzin Takayar and Alvin Ng, won awards for their presentations at the recent Australia and New Zealand Bone and Mineral Society Annual Scientific Meeting in Perth. Postdoctoral Fellows Drs Rachelle Johnson and Julie Quach were also recognised for their work.

PhD student Brian Liddicoat of the Stem Cell Regulation Unit won the Dirk van Bekkum New Investigator Award for the best PhD student presentation at the recent conference of the International Society for Experimental Hematology and Stem Cells, which was held in Amsterdam in August.

Suang Suang Koid, currently doing her PhD with Associate Professor Jock Campbell in SVI’s Molecular Cardiology Unit, was recognised as a state finalist in the 2012 AusBiotech-GSK Student Excellence Awards.

SVI students, Sabine Jurado, Jon Chee and Suang Suang Koid were also awarded prizes for their presentations made during St Vincent’s Research Week, held in August, along with researchers Jock Campbell, Kate Graham and Rachelle Johnson.

Congratulations to the following researchers who have had recent grant funding success:

Jon Oakhill and John Scott received an NHMRC Project Grant for their study, ‘Therapeutics for metabolic diseases’.

Natalie Sims and Jack Martin received an NHMRC Project Grant for their study, ‘Regulation of bone formation and destruction by EphrinB2/EphB4 signalling’.

Jock Campbell received an NHMRC Project Grant for his study, ‘Screening evaluation of the evolution of new heart failure extension study’.

Helen Thomas was appointed as an NHMRC Senior Research Fellow.

Carl Walkley received a Cancer Council Grant for his study, ‘New approaches to understand osteosarcoma’.

Sabine Jurado received a Cancer Council Victoria Postdoctoral Research Fellowship to continue her work in SVI’s Molecular Genetics Unit.

There are many, but one of the most important is patience. I’m not an especially patient person but you can’t do research without it.

It is ironic that I have also enjoyed fly-fishing, which requires great patience as well.

What advice you would give to aspiring researchers today?

My advice is that you have got to really love what you are doing and be tremendously interested in the questions you are addressing.

You have to be prepared to work beyond the hours that you are paid – well beyond the hours that you are paid.

It really is a vocation and you have got to be able to cope with adversity, as you have got to go back to the drawing board time and time again. Despite this, it is hugely rewarding.

I enjoy it very much and I think I’m very lucky. I’m still sufficiently interested and I love presenting at meetings and interacting with colleagues from around the world.

I’m very, very fortunate to be able to do all these things.

If you could narrow down just one achievement in your career what would it be?

It would be the discovery, purification and the cloning of parathyroid related protein as the cause of high blood calcium levels in cancer.

This protein is an important factor in how cancers spread to bone.

What is the most important quality in a successful researcher?

IMAGE: Jack Martin and family.
Funding awarded to Professor Michael Parker, Associate Professor Louise Purton and Dr Carl Walkley by the Australian Cancer Research Foundation (ACRF) late last year has allowed the Institute to purchase a cutting-edge instrument called a Laser Scanning Cytometer (LSC). The LSC is an emerging technology and is the only instrument of its kind currently available in Australia.

The LSC is unique because it enables researchers to study cells in their normal environment in a detailed manner, preserving their structure, biological properties and location in a way that is not possible with currently available technologies. This important feature lets researchers visually inspect and investigate specific cells, with a level of detail that was not previously possible.

Associate Professor Louise Purton explains, “The police cannot piece together a crime without clues relating to where the crime took place, who was involved and exactly what they did. The LSC technology allows us to collect all this sort of information: to see what is going on inside a tissue, identify the different cell types and what they are doing, exactly where they are, how many are involved, and to do this while maintaining the locations of all of the key players.”

She continues by saying that this is a huge advance on previous technology, which only allowed investigation of one or two of these parameters at a time. “For example, the LSC will allow my group to look at the effects of a particular cancer drug on a particular tissue type, and go back over time to see exactly what effect the drug might be having on different cell types, including cancer and non-cancer cells. Furthermore, we will now be able to perform studies we currently extensively do in mice, using human biopsy samples. This will allow us to verify our findings more quickly, which will lead to improved outcomes for patients with cancer and other diseases. This represents a giant step forward for us in terms of capability.”

Access to this equipment will help maintain medical research in Australia at the cutting edge, and advance world-class research at SVI into a whole range of diseases, including cancer, type 1 diabetes and heart disease.

PhD student David Ascher was one of 12 young Victorian scientists awarded a prestigious 2012 Victoria Fellowship. He was presented with the award at the State Library of Victoria by the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business, Louise Asher.

The Victoria Fellowships, each worth $18,000, were first awarded by the Victorian Government in 1998 to recognise young researchers with leadership potential and to enhance their future careers, while developing new ideas which could offer commercial benefit to Victoria.

David is a structural biologist working in Professor Michael Parker’s Structural Biology Unit. David’s PhD has focussed on Alzheimer’s disease and his project is aimed at developing drugs that will influence the outcome of the disease, by binding specifically to proteins involved in its pathology.

His future studies will take him to Cambridge University to work alongside a world leader in structure-based drug discovery. There he will be trained in specific techniques not yet available in Australia. He will also work on an enzyme called Rad51 that is involved in the development of multi-drug resistant cancers.

David says, “I am honoured to receive this Fellowship. It is a very exciting era to be a structural biologist and I am lucky to be able to work with the top people in the field, both here at SVI and at Cambridge.”

David says the Fellowship will help him contribute to the drug development program at SVI, which has recently been awarded a multimillion dollar grant by the Australian Cancer Research Foundation (ACRF) to establish the ACRF Rational Drug Discovery Centre.
A RUN TO REMEMBER

Amongst the 11,000 competitors at the starting line of the second annual Age City2Sea on the 11th of November (Remembrance Day) a group of 32 Team SVI runners in white laboratory coats stood out from the crowd. Flying the flag for Team SVI was a mixture of students, postdoctoral fellows, experienced researchers, administrative staff and family members, who helped to raise $6,000 to support Summer Student Scholarships at the Institute.

The Scholarships will help to give aspiring young researchers the chance to experience life in the lab for 6 weeks during their summer break from uni.

MARGARET’S LEGACY

Margaret and Tony Reeves made a donation to SVI earlier this year in honour of Margaret’s mother Margaret Mocatta, who passed away from lung cancer in 2001. The donation will fund a PhD Student Scholarship and be directed towards cancer and Alzheimer’s research.

Margaret says, “We understand that the dedicated PhD students need support, and we decided to offer a scholarship as a legacy to my mother Margaret. We particularly value the research on the diseases of ageing that is occurring at SVI. It is important to us that this scholarship in Mum’s honour be in the field of medical research, as her life revolved around medicine and care in the health sector. We also thought the sponsorship would give her an active place in the ‘new’ digital world while we are so far away from her final resting place.”

Margaret Mocatta was a dedicated wife, mother, grandmother, mother-in-law, nurse and palliative care volunteer. After training in nursing, her early career took her from NSW to the NT where she married and settled. Widowed at 36 years of age with four young children, Margaret moved her family to Lismore NSW and returned to nursing, working for 22 years at Lismore Base Hospital.

Margaret’s untimely death was from lung cancer. Always practical, she said that if her smoking/cancer could deter anyone from taking up such a habit, she would be happy to be an example. Her determination, optimism, sense of humour and faith led her through the worst and best of times.

Mathew Eley from SVI’s IT department was the first Team SVI runner to complete the 14km course, crossing the finish line in just 61 minutes.

He was joined by PhD student Alvin Ng, who started his research career as a summer student. Alvin says, “A summer research stint opened me to the real world of medical research, complete with its trials and tribulations. Within 3 months, I was exposed to cutting-edge research techniques and ideas that could make a real difference to patients in need of novel medical interventions.

I enjoyed my stint so much, that I decided to take up research as a career!”

Team SVI will continue to run for research, with a number of races already planned for 2013.

Supporters are welcome to join the team and can do so by calling the SVI Foundation on 9288 2480 or emailing foundation@svi.edu.au.

Image (top): Team SVI.
Image (bottom): Margaret Mocatta with her grandson.
On a warm Melbourne Spring evening, guests came from near and far to attend the SVI Support Group’s Annual Black Tie Dinner at The Athenaeum Club. With the help of 186 guests, the event raised an impressive $37,000 to support the SVI Student Scholarship Fund.

Since its inception, the Fund has provided top-up scholarships to a total of 21 Honours and 24 PhD students, some of whom have now begun their independent research careers in labs around the world.

PhD students commit to a very modest salary of $22,000 for three years. The Student Scholarships enable SVI to boost their stipends by $5,000 per year. This relieves some of the pressure on our best young minds and allows them to concentrate on discoveries that may benefit all of us in the future.

At the dinner, PhD student David Ascher explained the difference that the SVI Student Scholarship made to him. It was an initial donation from dedicated SVI supporter Colin North that provided David’s scholarship. Colin generously donated another $15,000 at the dinner. SVI is extremely appreciative of Colin’s ongoing support, which will see a future researcher benefit just as David did.

For over 13 years the SVI Support Group, led by SVI Foundation Board member Claire O’Callaghan, has been supporting students at the Institute, in that time raising more than $220,000 to help the cause.

SVI would like to acknowledge all those who have donated to scholarships at the Institute through our mid-year Student Appeal, and especially thank the SVI Support Group, whose outstanding long-term support of SVI is greatly appreciated.

**2013 Diary**

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<td>Feb</td>
<td>Cardiac tour of SVI labs and dinner</td>
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<td>Mar 3</td>
<td>10,000 Discovery Fund Luncheon</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>Inaugural Mother’s Day Luncheon, guest speaker Buttrose</td>
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<td>May 9</td>
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<td>10,000 Discovery Fund tour of labs and dinner</td>
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<td>Oct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>Team SVI run the City2Sea</td>
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SVI IN THE COMMUNITY

SVI is very much indebted to the wonderful support and commitment we receive from local community groups.

These groups work tirelessly to raise funds for medical research, with cakes stalls, concerts, fashion parades, opportunity shops and many other initiatives.

The All Souls Opportunity Shop has donated $5000 to SVI since 2008. This group supports a wide variety of worthwhile causes and SVI is fortunate to be one of them.

The Vermont Cancer Research Fundraising Group has been supporting SVI since 2002, with a total amount raised of $56,000. These funds have supported cancer research at SVI.

SVI is very grateful to all the wonderful people involved with these groups and sincerely thank them on behalf of the researchers at SVI.

If you are involved with a community group that raises funds for medical research, please consider SVI. If you would like to know more, contact Clare Lacey on (03) 9288 2480.

The Jack Holt Society

SVI launched ‘The Jack Holt Society’ at a function on December the 4th.

The Society honours the generosity of Jack Holt, whose bequest enabled the establishment of SVI, and others who have made a similar decision. Pamela McCorkell explains why she and her husband chose to support SVI.

“My late husband, Rex and I decided to support medical research. We did a lot of our own thorough research and were very impressed with St Vincent’s Institute and the calibre of their people and work.

We wanted to support the future of medical research for the benefit of the next generation, and you can do the same.”

If you have left a bequest or would like to know more, please contact Clare Lacey, Bequest Manager, on (03) 9288 2480.
With over $106,000 raised, the SVI/Newcrest Mining Charity Golf Day has followed through as a powerful fundraiser for the Institute for the fifth year running. The event, which was held on the 15th of October at Albert Park Golf Course, saw 26 teams tee off, with proceeds going to heart research at SVI.

The melodic hum of bagpipes greeted the golfers after 18 holes, and participants were treated to an evening of wine tasting, oyster shucking and a dinner at Lago restaurant, where they were offered golfing advice by pro Bruce Green and entertained by comedian Keith Scott.

In memory of the Founding Chair of the SVI Golf Committee, Michael Dwyer, who passed away from heart disease earlier this year, the ‘Michael Dwyer Memorial Trophy’ was launched. It was an honour to have Michael’s wife Sally in attendance to present the award to Luke Mussared from Maxxia for the straightest drive on hole 6.

The team from Credit Suisse also went home with an award, with captain Peter Paltoglou taking home the Jack Holt trophy for coming first on the day.

The Golf Day has raised in excess of $342,000 over the last five years. The day would not be possible without the support of its sponsors, particularly long-term supporter and Gold Sponsors Newcrest Mining.

Greg Robinson, CEO of Newcrest Mining said, “The day is such a great event and is growing in popularity each year. We are proud to be the Gold Sponsors and so pleased that so many of our suppliers choose to participate each year, ensuring funds are raised for such an important cause.”

SVI is grateful to the Golf Committee for their tireless work to make the event such a success. Chaired by Leon Wiegard, the group consists of Michael Kay, Mark Kerr, Barry Holbrook, Charlie Happell, Damian Murphy and Peter McCarthy.

SVI thanks our corporate sponsors:

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THE SEASON OF HOPE NEVER ENDS.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT IN 2012.

New FRONTIERS

Describing an image of the distant pale blue dot of Earth photographed from space, astronomer Carl Sagan said ‘Consider again that dot. That’s here. That’s home. That’s us.

On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives.’

Researchers at St Vincent’s Institute spend their time considering a different kind of pale blue dot, one considerably smaller, but full of secrets nonetheless.

The cells depicted are stained with a chemical that binds to DNA: they too are an archive of everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, and, what’s more, who ever will be.

Researchers at SVI are working with cells such as those pictured in the images, to find new treatments for diseases like bone cancer and type 1 diabetes.
MAKING A GIFT TO
MEDICAL RESEARCH

By supporting SVI’s medical research, you can make a difference.

1. Donate now to SVI
I want to make a single donation of:
☐ $25 ☐ $50 ☐ $100 ☐ $250 ☐ $500 ☐ $1000
☐ Other $

2. Join the SVI 1000 Club
I want to make an annual donation of $1000 for:
☐ 3 years ☐ 5 years ☐ Other ________________

Type of membership:
☐ New or ☐ Renewing
☐ Private or ☐ Corporate

3. Join the SVI $10,000 Discovery Fund
An investment in the $10,000 fund is an investment in the future needs of the Institute. For more information contact Madeleine Whiting on (03) 9288 2480

4. Leave a bequest to SVI
If you would like to talk to someone about making a bequest to SVI please contact Clare Lacey on (03) 9288 2480

See our website, www.svi.edu.au if you would like to make periodic payments from your bank account or credit card

Donation payment details
☐ Cheque (please make payable to St Vincent’s Institute)
☐ Credit card (please tick one of the following cards and complete details)

Card type (please tick)
☐ Diners ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Amex

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SVI is endorsed as a tax deductible gift recipient. All donations over $2 are tax deductible. SVIMR ABN: 52 004 705 640.

Please return to:
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