



pips 'n' pieces

MARCH 2021



PO Box 278 Waratah NSW 2298 • P: 02 4985 0103 • F: 02 4985 0101 • E: info@hmf.org.au • W: hmf.org.au
Facebook: facebook.com/hmf.newcastle • You Tube: HMFmelanoma • Instagram: hmfnewcastle



Happy New Year

Happy new year everybody and welcome to 2021.

Our AGM was held in mid December and I'm delighted to advise that all of our 2020 Management Committee have returned for 2021. We have one new addition and welcome Jason Brown to the Committee this year. Jason is a melanoma patient who was first diagnosed in 2015 when he was working in a FIFO job in WA's mining industry. After his diagnosis and initial treatment he moved back to his home town of Newcastle where he works as a Financial Planner.

Jason joined the HMF committee because he is passionate about raising awareness of sun protection behaviour and the importance of early detection of melanoma in his local community, especially in the of 15-39 year old generation where melanoma is the most common cancer.



▲ Jason Brown

Survey estimates 21% of melanomas undiagnosed during Covid-19 pandemic

Source: Melanoma Research Victoria , PRWeb, January 2021

A recent survey of over 700 dermatologists around the world has revealed the shocking impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the detection of melanoma skin cancer.

Compared to a normal year of performing patient skin examinations, dermatologists estimate that one fifth (21%) of melanomas may have gone undiagnosed in 2020, with one third (33.6%) of appointments missed due to the pandemic.

When these figures are considered alongside the World Health Organization's (WHO) most recent melanoma incidence rates, the survey suggests that over 60,000 melanomas have gone undiagnosed worldwide.

HMF 2021 Committee

CHAIRPERSON

Janelle Kirk

VICE CHAIR

Andrew McMahon

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Claudia Tolhurst

SECRETARY

Rebecca Boyd

TREASURER

Jacqueline Evans

PUBLIC OFFICER

Jacqueline Evans

MELANOMA SUPPORT GROUP

Lisa Hamilton

GENERAL COMMITTEE

Leonie Murray

Hannah Stanton

Michele Whitbourne

Jason Brown

PATRON

Paul Cave AM

AMBASSADORS

Holly Edmunds

Tracy Garner

Patrick Langlois

Daniel Martine

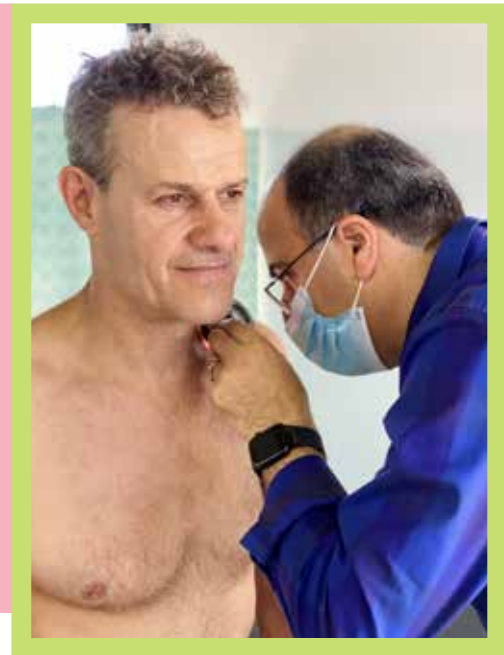
Erin Lewis

Bella Williams



Foundation News

Claudia Tolhurst



To say it's been a busy couple of months since our newsletter would be an understatement.

After working from home for nine months due to COVID restrictions, I am delighted to be back in the HMF office at the Newcastle Melanoma Unit. Some recent changes within the unit led to a move and my office is now located in the back corner of the building with a much nicer view of the vacant block rather than the car park. I am very grateful to have an office within the Unit which allows patients to access HMF if and when needed.

We have been working hard on a few exciting initiatives and looks like we're in for a busy year ahead.

Our spotcheck campaign has been running for 3 months now and as I write this report, we have one clinic to

go – Saturday 27th February. I am really looking forward to sharing the wrap up and all of the statistics of this campaign with you in our next newsletter, but what I can tell you now is, we are saving lives and changing behaviours. Every session has been fully booked and the generous Doctors from Newcastle Skin Check who have donated their time to make this campaign successful have been working tirelessly to help us in our mission to defeat melanoma through early detection.

It has been a mixed demographic of people who have attended Spotcheck – all ages from all walks of life. It was great to have State Member for Newcastle - Tim Crakanthorp MP call in for a skin check with Dr Tony Azzi from Newcastle Skin Check.

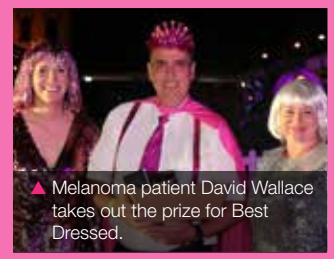


Local Partnership

Late last year I was introduced to Ellie Wells, General Manager of the Hunter Breast Cancer Foundation (HBCF). Ellie heads a team of dedicated staff and volunteers who provide patient care services to Breast Cancer patients in the Hunter. Their services include patient transport, house cleaning, gardening, wellness programs etc and they currently service around 500 patients in the region.

We are delighted to announce that we are partnering with

the HBCF to extend these services to Melanoma patients. Whilst we have always provided patient support, the service model that the HBCF has in place will give us a more structured approach to providing practical support where and when it's needed most. There is some work to be done on our website to make the booking process a simple, user friendly process. Should you or someone you know need assistance in the meantime please call me on 0412 955934 or email claudia@hmf.org.au.



▲ Melanoma patient David Wallace takes out the prize for Best Dressed.

Knockers & Moles – The Fundraiser

The partnership with HBCF doesn't stop there. After comparing notes on the impact COVID-19 had on our fundraising ability in 2020, Ellie and I were throwing ideas around about a joint fundraiser. I was introducing Ellie to someone over a coffee, explaining that we both work in the cancer charity space and commented that Ellie represents the 'knockers' and I represent the 'moles'. From that conversation, the fundraising event "Knockers and Moles" was born.....and with a name like that, who else could we ask to host but Newcastle's very own iconic drag queen, Timberlina.

Timberlina presented a night of fun, trivia and bingo with a drag twist. Her trusty sidekicks Foxxe Faux and Abork also added their own flavour of fun to the event and an entertaining night was had by all who attended. It was so good to see people out having a good time whilst still being COVID safe and practicing social distancing.

We took a risk in organising this event, knowing that COVID restrictions could shut it down at any minute if we had an outbreak. We launched the tickets on a Tuesday morning and by Saturday we were SOLD OUT thanks to the generosity of our local community.

The event could not have been possible without the generosity and support of several local businesses including Timberlina, Port of Newcastle, Peter Drayton Wines, Hunter Central Coast Development Corporation, The Station, Sharp & Co Platters, Liquor & Gaming Solutions, Scion Audio & Events, Purser Corporate Communications and DoughHeads.

We are extremely grateful for and would like to thank those local businesses who helped us out by donating

prizes for our raffles and auctions including Pinot & Picasso, Timberlina, Mary M Artistry, Alloggio, Sharp & Co Platters, Event Cinemas, Blooms by Katy, Shy Skin Australia, Boydell's, Dalton Partners, Newcastle Skin Check and Liz, Sean, Mary and James McNamara.

Of course, an event this big isn't possible without the hard work of the many volunteers from both HMF and HBCF and to them we are also eternally grateful. Overall it was a highly successful event and raised \$24,000 for the 2 charities to share.



▲ Some of the Melanoma Unit staff



▲ HMF Volunteers



Get Involved

There are many ways you can get involved with the Hunter Melanoma Foundation.

Volunteer

We have an incredible network of volunteers, but as the old saying goes, you can never have too much of a good thing. Why not consider becoming a HMF volunteer. Our volunteer roles vary and there's something available to suit everyone if you want to make a difference.

Jobs vary from volunteering at event, to folding newsletters and packing information bags and sometimes general administration work. We generally send an email out when we're in need and you choose if you want to participate or not – it's that easy. Visit our website to sign up or shoot an email to claudia@hmf.org.au.

Membership - \$11 Per Year

Show your support by becoming a HMF member and we'll send you our newsletter 3 times a year as well as give you pre-sale access to many of our fundraising events before the general public. Visit our website to join or fill in the membership form at the end of this email.

Fundraise For Us

Every little bit of fundraising helps.....whether you raise \$10 or \$10,000 we are grateful for every cent. HMF is completely funded by Membership fees, donations, local business

grants and fundraising. We hold a couple of big signature fundraising events each year, like our Race Day, but some of the best fundraising is done by more intimate private events that people hold on our behalf. Whether you want to run a marathon, host a bbq, run a raffle....it's up to you. We are here to provide support for any fundraising you would like to take on. If you're interested, why not give me a call on 0412 955934 or shoot me an email to claudia@hmf.org.au.

Tell Your Story

We are all about raising awareness of melanoma, education about sun safety and of course the importance of early detection of melanoma. If you have a melanoma story, we'd love to hear it. Sharing your story might just be the turning point in getting the message through to someone who needs to hear it. You can tell your story via our website or again by calling or emailing Claudia.

Buy Our Merchandise

We have a range of merchandise available on our website including some beautiful sun smart SPF50+ swimwear and rash shirts. You can visit the online store via our website or our Facebook and Instagram pages.



Coming Up

Race Day

Our annual Race Day has always been one of our premier fundraising events which was unfortunately cancelled in 2020. We are delighted to say, that COVID permitting, the Race Day is back on in 2021. The date is set down for 8th May at Newcastle Racecourse and we are looking forward to seeing all of our loyal supporters face to face in a day filled with fun, fashion, follies and fundraising. Tickets available by contacting Claudia on 0412 955934 or claudia@hmf.org.au

HMF Movie Night

We have partnered with Event Cinemas Kotara to host a Gold class Movie night on Thursday 25th March.

We will be screening the movie Love, Weddings and Other Disasters - A multi-story romantic comedy about the people who work on weddings to create the perfect day for a loving couple - while their own relationships are outlandish, odd, crazy and far from perfect. Directed by Dennis Dugan. With Maggie Grace, Diane Keaton, Jeremy Irons, Diego Boneta.

Tickets are \$50 and include a drink on arrival, unlimited soft drink and popcorn. Limited numbers available so get in quick to avoid disappointment. Purchase tickets: <https://www.trybooking.com/BPAAB> or call Claudia on 0412 955934.



HMF
Hunter Melanoma Foundatio

2021 RACE DAY

Saturday, 8th May - from 11.30AM



Thursday
25th March

GOLD CLASS CINEMA NIGHT

Scan here to book tickets



6pm for
6.30 screening

Entry to Gold Class,
Unlimited softdrink
and popcorn



DIANE KEATON JEREMY IRONS MAGGIE GRACE DIEGO BONETA ANDREW BACHELOR
A match made in madness.
**LOVE, WEDDINGS
& OTHER DISASTERS**

\$50



From the Support Group

Lisa Hamilton



We each have a part to play in the journey of life – as the German philosopher said “That which does not kill us makes us strong”. (Not that I’m saying I’m strong!)

For those on the Melanoma journey I have watched the lives of some amazing people and their strengths.

As I grieved for my husband, whose life was suddenly cut short by Melanoma, I chose rather than give up to instead continue the Hunter Melanoma Support Group which he started only 4 months before he died. I chose to use a negative feeling into a positive outcome as I have watched some amazing Melanoma patients navigate through their cancer journey. While so many of them often choose to protect their loved ones by not continually bringing up their

concerns, I feel that I have been privileged to be available not only in giving some a one on one sounding board if they wanted but I have also witnessed that the Support Group provides a safe place for them to share concerns, provide information or encouragement for their journey. Once you walk this road either as a patient, carer or close friend there is a much greater empathy and understanding of others who also walk this journey as they feel able to share at a deeper level and feel understood.



The goal of the Hunter Melanoma Support Group is to provide a safe place for those on a similar journey - It doesn't have to be a lonely road!



I would welcome and encourage any who are travelling this Melanoma journey to join us in a non-threatening place to either, just come and listen, share concerns or frustrations with others who understand. Please know that I am also available to have coffee with those who just want to talk, as I know others in the group would also be prepared to do.

The goal of the Hunter Melanoma Support Group is to provide a safe place for those on a similar journey - It doesn't have to be a lonely road!

Lisa Hamilton, facilitator.

Newsletter

If you're currently receiving a hard copy of our newsletter and would like receive an electronic copy, please send us an email to info@hmf.org.au and we will add you to our email list.



Melanoma breakthrough - neoadjuvant treatment saving lives.

Melanoma Institute Australia

<https://www.melanoma.org.au/news-events/news/melanoma-breakthrough-neoadjuvant-treatment-saving-lives/>

In what is being hailed as one of the biggest breakthroughs in melanoma treatment since the advent of immunotherapy, a new study has revealed that drug treatment before surgery is effective in preventing deadly spread of the disease.

The study, published in the prestigious journal *Nature Medicine*, pooled data from six clinical trials where drug therapy was given before surgery, known as neoadjuvant therapy.

Researchers found that giving Stage III patients a short course of pre-operative targeted or immunotherapy was effective, and the stronger a patient's response to that treatment in the first six to nine weeks, the greater the likelihood their disease would not recur after surgery.

Remarkably, in the 75% of patients who responded well to dual immunotherapy given before surgery, only 3% saw their tumours return after surgery, suggesting that 97% will likely be cured.

'The neoadjuvant approach is a new way of dealing with melanoma and is a game changer for Stage III patients with bulky disease which has spread to their lymph nodes,' said Professor Georgina Long AO, Melanoma Institute Australia (MIA) Co-Medical Director and study senior author.

'We have flipped the 'surgery then drugs' rationale on its head. By utilising our arsenal of ground-breaking new treatments before surgical removal of the tumours, this approach is proving effective in stopping melanoma in its tracks and preventing its recurrence and spread to distant organs.'

Data from the study suggests that immunotherapy may work more effectively when given before, rather than after surgery, due to the presence of the bulky tumour provoking an immune response. The concept is similar to sniffer dogs being trained by exposure to illegal drugs – if they know what they're searching for, the more effective they are at detection.

In addition to training the immune system to work more effectively against melanoma, neoadjuvant therapy also enables a clinician to assess early on if a patient is responding to a particular treatment and decide on an alternative plan if needed. It can also make surgery less complex.

Associate Professor Alex Menzies, MIA Oncologist and study first author, said; 'Although neoadjuvant therapy for Stage III patients is not currently an approved standard of treatment, we anticipate that this will ultimately change following the very promising clinical trials results.'

The currently approved schedule is to first surgically remove the melanoma tumours, and then give targeted or immunotherapy post-operatively (known as adjuvant therapy). This approach halves the risk of melanoma recurrence. However, it's impossible to tell on an individual level whether the drug treatment is working.

'This study shows that giving drug therapy before surgery

reduces risk of recurrence even further, preventing spread to vital organs like the brain and liver and saving more lives. We can also now tell whether the drugs are working for an individual patient, so we can direct subsequent treatment and follow-up accordingly,' Associate Professor Menzies said.

Professor Long added: 'This early marker of a patient's response to treatment should be considered a new benchmark for rapid drug development in melanoma. It is also a great platform to help fast track laboratory research to understand why some patients do not respond to treatment.'

Melanoma Institute Australia has been instrumental in trialling neoadjuvant drug therapy and is a foundation member of the International Neoadjuvant Melanoma Consortium (INMC).

This study is the first large analysis of immunotherapy in the neoadjuvant setting in any cancer, results of which should pave the way for the use of immunotherapy pre-operatively in many other cancer types.

Australia has the highest melanoma rates in the world with one person diagnosed every 30 minutes, and it is estimated 1300 people will die from the disease in Australia this year.

This latest research has focussed on patients with earlier stage melanoma (Stage III), and how to prevent their disease from progressing to advanced melanoma. The study will also assist with the transition of drug development into the neoadjuvant setting rather than the increasingly complex and inefficient metastatic setting.

'Treatment for advanced melanoma patients, where their disease has metastasised and spread to distant organs, has come a long way in the last decade,' said Professor Richard Scolyer, MIA Co-Medical Director.

'It is exciting that patients with earlier stage disease are now also benefiting from research breakthroughs. If we can prevent these patients from progressing to Stage IV or metastatic disease, then we will be even closer to achieving our goal of zero deaths from melanoma.'

Read the paper in *Nature Medicine*:

'Pathological response and survival with neoadjuvant therapy in melanoma: a pooled analysis from the International Neoadjuvant Melanoma Consortium (INMC)'

Alexander M. Menzies, Rodabe N. Amaria, Elisa A. Rozeman, Alexander C. Huang, Michael T. Tetzlaff, Bart A. van de Wiel, Serigne Lo, Ahmad A. Tarhini, Elizabeth M. Burton, Thomas E. Pennington, Robyn P. M. Saw, Xiaowei Xu, Giorgos C. Karakousis, Paolo A. Ascierto, Andrew J. Spillane, Alexander C. J. van Akkooi, Michael A. Davies, Tara C. Mitchell, Hussein A. Tawbi, Richard A. Scolyer, Jennifer A. Wargo, Christian U. Blank & Georgina V. Long. *Nat Med* (2021).

For media enquiries, please contact:

Jennifer Durante |Melanoma Institute Australia
0412 798 990 | jennifer.durante@melanoma.org.au

Thank you for your support

M Connors
B Seston
R Davies
V Corbett
L Tolhurst
E Skelton

G Hunter
Shy Skin
K Lynch
K Quick
C Hill
A Levett

V McKim
I Pfennigwerth
M Tolhurst
Rotary Club of East Maitland

PKF

A special **THANK YOU** to PKF Accountants and Business Advisers for their support.



Yes, I would like to help fight melanoma.

Enclosed is my gift to be used for research, treatment, education, service and care for melanoma patients in our region.

Please find enclosed my tax deductible donation for \$ _____

I have enclosed my cheque / money order made payable to: **Hunter Melanoma Foundation**

OR please charge my credit card Visa Mastercard

Card Number Expiry

Name _____

Address _____ Postcode _____

Signature _____

Please return your gift to: **Hunter Melanoma Foundation PO Box 278 Waratah NSW 2298.**