Charlies Foundation for Research
GETTING BETTER TOGETHER.

SEPTEMBER 2014

Charlies Foundation *for Research*

Newsletter

An Update on the Charles Day Tissue Bank

In 2012 the haematology department of Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital/Pathwest was the recipient of a very generous donation which enabled the creation of a world class Tissue Bank.

The family of the late Mr Charles Day approached the former head of department, Clinical Professor David Joske (pictured), hoping to do something to honour Mr Day's memory. Once acquainted with the idea and value of a tissue bank, they kindly agreed to support the venture.

SGCH Clinical Professor David Joske

At the time, Professor Joske recalled meeting Mr Charles Day during his treatment at SCGH for a haematological disorder: "His case was unusual in that his disease, although relapsing many, many times, remained sensitive to treatment each time. This meant he was seen in the department over many years and came to be well-known to many of us. I recall the bravery and the honesty with which he faced each relapse. We spoke several times about his adventures with various building endeavours and some of the 'tougher nuts' he had to crack, solving problems like high water tables affecting foundations and so on. I believe the concept of a Tissue Bank would have appealed greatly to him as a practical person who believed in medical research. We once discussed, for example, the notion that cases like his might provide more answers to the riddle of cancer than those cases that rapidly became resistant."

Today the Charles Day Tissue Bank has around 3,000 stored blood and bone marrow samples on several hundred patients of the Haematology department. A fantastic achievement since the project began in 2012, with high quality research relying on high quality samples.

More recently, a Software Inventory Program has been written in-house by Scott Cornwall, the scientist employed within the Tissue Bank to oversee day-to-day operations, and new hardware has been bought which allows samples to be barcoded for close identification and efficient retrieval.

Thanks to the samples stored in the Tissue Bank, a number of research projects are in various stages, including nearly completed projects in chronic lymphocytic leukaemia from which some publications have already resulted. One external research project application has been received, and approved, and work is proceeding with UWA Collaborators on this project.

Those of us associated with the Charles Day Bank are enormously grateful and appreciative of Mrs Eileen Day's generous second donation and ongoing support, which will allow the Tissue Bank to further develop and continue the important work of optimal, timely collection of tissue samples from patients with haematological disorders at QEII Medical Centre for current and future research.

We extend our sincere thanks once more to the Day family, and look forward to updating you on developments with this valued program into the future.

Australian First in Cancer Treatment Unveiled at SCGH

SCGH unveiled its latest weapon in the fight against cancer – Australia's first CyberKnife – on Wednesday 23 April in the Cancer Centre.

Speaking at the launch, Health Minister Kim Hames said the CyberKnife was a highly specialised radiation therapy device, which delivered multiple beams of high dose radiation to a precise area using a robotic arm.

"The CyberKnife enables doctors to treat certain tumours with pinpoint accuracy via a robotic arm which compensates for movement of the body during treatment and minimises damage to surrounding healthy tissue," Dr Hames said.

"The CyberKnife is particularly beneficial for the treatment of certain lung, brain, spine, liver and prostate cancers which may be otherwise inoperable, or where existing treatment options may compromise other vital organs.

In time we're expecting as many as 450 patients to receive treatment from the CyberKnife each year."

Chief Radiation Therapist Rachel Kearvell explained that another advantage of the technologically advanced CyberKnife was its ability to treat tumours that move, such as those in the lungs, to a greater level of accuracy.

"This ability really sets the CyberKnife apart," Rachel said.

"Other technology is not able to do this. The CyberKnife system comprises a radiation therapy machine called a linac, a robot, and image guidance to track the tumour and detect very small patient movements and correct the position of the linac.

This enables it, in suitable cases, to deliver high doses of radiation directly to the tumour with sub-millimetre accuracy.

Due to this accuracy, larger doses can be delivered, and this means that often fewer treatments are required than other radiation therapies."

The $9 million CyberKnife will operate alongside the five linear accelerators already in use and treating patients at the State Cancer Centre, in SCGH's DD Block.

Gavin Bonser Leaves a Legacy

In life, Gavin Bonser was a dedicated husband, father, police officer and army reservist. Following his passing from Non Hodgkin's Lymphoma in February, his dying wish is being brought to life by a large network of family, friends and colleagues who loved and supported him.

Gavin's family are donating three automatic observation ('Obs') machines in his memory to Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital following an online fundraising campaign.

Gavin's wife Shelley said it was Gavin's wish for the family to donate an Obs machine to Ward G73, as when they needed to take Gavin's Obs, which was quite regularly, the staff would have to find a shared machine.

"Gavin said 'Shelley please make sure you get the ward a machine and name it after me, so I'm always on this ward with all these amazing staff, and having more Obs machines will help a lot of people forever.'" said Shelley. "So I needed to fulfil his dying wish."

The online campaign was started by friend Lenny Eng and supported by more than 100 donors. It exceeded all expectation, enabling the purchase of not one Obs machine as hoped, but three. In addition it left change for a significant contribution to Canteen, which has supported Gavin's daughter Sarah and son Matthew during their father's illness and continues to support them today.

Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Ward G73 Clinical Nurse Specialist Eileen Ryan said the donation was extremely generous and would significantly benefit other cancer patients.

"Obs machines which monitor blood pressure and oxygen saturation are in high demand and the addition of two to our Cancer Ward (G73) and one to the Haematology Day Ward will ensure more timely access which will ultimately give nursing staff more time to care for patients," said Eileen.

Shelley pictured with her son Matthew and daughter Sarah

"Gavin was a fighter who was always jovial and making jokes and never complained. The staff remember him for embracing a young mentally challenged person with whom he was sharing a room and taking the time to support him and build his confidence where others may not have."

Haematology Clinical Nurse Specialist Esther Beecham said the donation was an extremely thoughtful gesture of Gavin Bonser and he will be remembered by staff at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital for his generosity of spirit.

"It is a credit to Gavin's family that in their period of need, they have reached out to help others in Gavin's memory," she said.

Anyone wishing to make a donation to the hospital can contact the Charlies Foundation *for Research* on 9346 2042 or by emailing info@charliesfoundation.org.au

Professor Robinson Presented RACP Award

Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Consultant Respiratory Physician and Shenton Park resident Bruce Robinson AM has been presented the Royal Australasian College of Chest Physicians (RACP) 75th Anniversary Award.

The award recognises Professor Robinson's wide-ranging achievements including as a consultant respiratory physician with interests in cancer research, community service and medical education.

Although most widely acknowledged for his research work in cancer, particularly the asbestos cancers, he is recognised by his students, colleagues and patients as a superb mentor, caring physician and humanitarian.

Professor Robinson said he was honoured by the recognition, especially as it was given by medical peers in the RACP, whose opinions he holds in the highest regard.

"I am extremely grateful for this accolade but wish to emphasise this is really an award and acknowledgement of all the brilliant people I have been working with in all areas. Our achievements are collective achievements and our work continues to bring much personal and professional satisfaction," he said.

Professor Robinson is internationally recognised for his research into cancer immunology and asbestos diseases; in particular, his discovery of mesothelin, the world's first blood test for mesothelioma and several world-first therapies.

His clinical interest and ground-breaking research into asbestos diseases has enabled him to care clinically for thousands of asbestos victims and their families at medical clinics as well as through community and consumer groups.

Alongside his clinical and scientific interests, Professor Robinson has taught medical students and junior hospital staff for more than 40 years. This includes his commitment to the RACP's examinations activities, which is demonstrated by his 30-year contribution to exam preparation and training for registrars. Professor Robinson has also run a successful pre-intern training camp for University of Western Australia final year medical students over the past 23 years.

In 2013 Professor Robinson was named the Western Australian of the Year, WA Australian of the Year and received an Order of Australia. He has won numerous other accolades for his achievements in medical research and community projects, including the Fathering Project.

He was nominated for the award by Professor Gary Lee in SCGH's Department of Respiratory Medicine, and supported by Professor Lou Irving and Professor Peter Le Souef.