

# SUMMER | 2021

# RESEARCH UPDATE



## Our Research

Introducing Ms Samantha Watson, a PhD student at University of South Australia and supervisor, Dr Pablo Garcia Valtanen

### Research overview

Thank you for supporting research efforts to address the alarming statistics of melanoma. Still referred to as Australia's national cancer, a melanoma diagnosis occurs every 30 minutes and takes the life of 1,700 Australians annually. We want to share with you our progress you help achieve.

AMRF provides annual research grants to researchers developing new pathways or taking innovative approaches that will lead to a reduction in the incidence of melanoma and improve outcomes for patients.

Our Research Advisory Committee advises on recent trends in the development of treatment for melanoma. An evaluation framework has been established to assist in the identification of the key research areas to optimise our funding support.

Expressions of Interest are sought annually from melanoma researchers across Australia.

AMRF supports early career researchers and is highly selective about projects supported. Grant applications must be contestable and show evidence of scientific merit.

Thank you for being an important part of the lifechanging work we do. See over!



*Mark Streeting is a volunteer AMRF Board Member and a melanoma survivor. Mark was surprised when his GP sent him to a dermatologist to check out a leg rash, but it may have saved his life. Instead of the rash, the doctor was more interested in a spot on his toe. This turned out to be Stage III melanoma. Mark is now in training to go on the AMRF Larapinta fundraising trek rescheduled for May 2022.*

Want to know more?  
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[www.melanomaresearch.com.au](http://www.melanomaresearch.com.au)

Contact: Marisa Chilcott

Ph 0422345426 Email: [Marisa@melanomaresearch.com.au](mailto:Marisa@melanomaresearch.com.au)

ABN 26 429 861 213

# Your support makes all the difference

Introducing AMRF Grant Recipients and the projects you support.



2021 Early Career Scientist Grant – Dr Pouya Faridi  
Monash University Vic  
*Study the microenvironment and immunological makeup of melanoma*



2020 Post graduate Student Grant – Jordan Conway  
University of Sydney  
*Research into liver metastases from melanoma primary*



2020 Post graduate Student Grant - Aaron Beasley  
Edith Cowen University WA  
*Early Detection (Uveal) Eye Melanoma*



2020 Early Career Scientist Grant – Dr Pauline Zaenker  
Edith Cowen University WA  
*Development of diagnostic blood tests*



2018/19 Post Graduate Student Grant – Samantha J. Watson  
University of South Australia  
*Research into Endosomal Biomarkers to define Melanoma Cancer*



2013-18 Professor Brendon Coventry  
University of Adelaide  
*Improving Melanoma therapy using timed coordinated vaccine and chemotherapy delivery*

- 75% of skin cancers deaths are due to melanoma
- 16,878 Australians are estimated to be diagnosed with melanoma in 2022
- Melanoma is the fourth most common cancer in Australia
- Melanoma is the most common cancer in young Australians (aged 15- 39 years)
- Melanomas are caused by prolonged exposure to UV radiation and sunlight
- Surveys show that one in four teenagers (26%) get sunburnt every weekend in summer.
- The Cancer Council estimates that Australians spend more than \$1billion pa treating skin cancer.

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## In Focus

2021 Post Graduate Student Grant - Rebecca Simpson  
MIA & University of Sydney

*Investigating the effectiveness of diet in altering-systemic immune function during immunotherapy.*

My research looks at the role of the gut microbiome during immunotherapy. Specifically, how diet and intestinal microbes influence the efficacy and safety of treatment. Since diet can alter the microbiome thereby impacting gut “leakiness” and the inflammatory state of the immune system. We hypothesise that changes to diet could beneficially alter the microbiome to improve both the effectiveness and safety of therapy.

With the support of AMRF we will test whether dietary changes are able to beneficially alter the micrombiome which could lead to favourable immune changes during immunotherapy .