

Media Release

Ramaciotti Foundations distribute close to \$780,000 to advance Australian biomedical research

Award recognises ground-breaking advancements in breast cancer prevention and treatment

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Perpetual, as trustee of the Clive and Vera Ramaciotti Foundations, has announced the 2016 recipients of the respected Ramaciotti Awards for Biomedical Research with \$778,310 distributed in total to seven biomedical researchers.

Husband and wife team Professor Jane Visvader and Professor Geoff Lindeman, of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, were selected as the joint recipients of **the Ramaciotti Medal for Excellence in Biomedical Research**, an annual award of \$50,000 to honour an outstanding discovery in clinical or experimental biomedical research.

With past Ramaciotti winners having been responsible for the development of the world's first cervical cancer vaccines and the Cochlear implant, the awards highlight the significant impact that philanthropy can have on the wellbeing of millions of people.

Professors Visvader and Lindeman received the medal for their pioneering work in discovering new approaches to breast cancer treatment and prevention.

Over the past decade, the pair were instrumental in a series of ground-breaking discoveries, including the discovery of breast stem cells and other cell types in the breast, providing a new framework for understanding how breast cancers arise. They found that 'daughter' cells of stem cells were the culprit cells that give rise to breast cancer in women who carry a faulty BRCA1 gene. The researchers have also discovered that an existing medication - denosumab - may have potential to prevent breast cancer.

Women who carry the faulty BRCA1 gene are at a high risk of developing aggressive breast cancer. Currently some women with a faulty gene choose surgical removal of the breast tissue to reduce their chances of developing cancer.

"We are very honoured to receive the prestigious Ramaciotti Biomedical Research Award. This Medal is testament to 15 years of continuous work – not only by us, but also a very talented team of students, postdocs and research assistants, and our collaborators who have been instrumental to these discoveries," said Professor Visvader.

"The support of the Ramaciotti Foundation will help our efforts to transfer our laboratory's discoveries to the clinic," added Professor Lindeman.

Up to \$150,000 will also be allocated to each of the five recipients of the **Ramaciotti Health Investment Grants**. These grants are awarded to autonomous early career scientists to support health or medical research with a potential path to clinical application within five years.

Commenting on the significance of the awards, Perpetual's National Manager of Philanthropy and Non-Profit Services, Caitriona Fay, said: "As trustee of the Ramaciotti Foundations, we are proud to be supporting Australia's biomedical community. The Ramaciotti Foundations are one of the largest private contributors to biomedical research in Australia and have provided essential support to some of our most remarkable scientists since 1970.

"Vera Ramaciotti's vision and the legacy she has created is a leading example of the powerful way philanthropy can deliver to the community."

Professor Derek Hart of The University of Sydney led the Ramaciotti Scientific Advisory Committee which directed Perpetual in selecting the recipients.

Professor Hart said: "We had an extraordinarily difficult time selecting from the outstanding array of applicants. The five projects chosen are expected to make a major contribution in translating novel preclinical advances into clinical practice."

"We look forward to seeing the impact of the grants on these significant research undertakings."

This year's medal and grants bring the total funds distributed by the Ramaciotti Foundations to over \$57 million since 1970.

The recipients of the 2016 Ramaciotti Health Investment Grants are:

Researcher	Institution	Project title
Dr Jane Kohlhoff	UNSW Australia	The 'Watch Me Grow' App for identification of developmental and mental health problems in early childhood: a validation study
A/Professor Lyndell Lim	Centre for Eye Research Australia Ltd	Improving cataract surgery outcomes in patients with Diabetic Macular Oedema (the DiMeCAT Trial)
A/Professor Philippa Middleton	South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute Ltd	Optimega: Preventing preterm birth and improving long term and intergenerational health through personalising dietary fat intake for pregnant women
Dr Sanjay Patel	The Heart Research Institute Ltd	Colchicine – A novel role in stabilising vulnerable atherosclerotic plaque
Dr Mark Polizzotto	UNSW Australia (Kirby Institute for Infection and Immunity)	Immune modulation for prevention of anogenital cancer in people with persistent high-grade anal intraepithelial neoplasia

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Note to editors

About the Ramaciotti Foundations

Managed by Perpetual, the Ramaciotti Foundations started off with \$6.7 million in funds in 1970 with the first major grant going to the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in 1971. This assisted with the establishment of the new Clive and Vera Ramaciotti Research Laboratories building. Since then, the Foundations have donated over \$57 million to biomedical research and are one of the largest private contributors to the field. The Ramaciotti Foundations continue to support biomedical research and each year make significant distributions via the Ramaciotti Awards, providing funding support to areas such as molecular biology, genetics and immunology, and assisting young investigators taking up new challenges in biomedical research.

For more information about the Ramaciotti Foundations visit www.perpetual.com.au/ramaciotti

About the Ramaciotti Medal for Excellence in Biomedical Research

The Ramaciotti Medal is an annual award of \$50,000. The Medal honours an individual who has made an outstanding discovery (or discoveries) in clinical or experimental biomedical research that has had an important impact on biomedical science, clinical science, or the way in which healthcare is delivered. To be eligible for the Ramaciotti Medal, the greater part of the nominee's work leading to the discovery (or discoveries) must have been conducted in Australia and they must still be actively engaged in this work. The applicant must be peer nominated and the final recipient is selected based on a recommendation by the Ramaciotti Scientific Advisory Committee to Perpetual. Many past winners are highly regarded individuals in the top echelon of the biomedical research industry. High profile past winners include Professor Sam Berkovic, Professor Chris Parish, Professor TJ Martin, Professor Robert Baxter and Professor Ian Frazer. Professor Carola Vinuesa was the 2015 recipient.

About the Ramaciotti Health Investment Grants

Ramaciotti Health Investment grants of up to \$150,000 are awarded to individuals in universities, public hospitals or institutes for a contribution towards the undertaking of health or medical research with the potential path to clinical application within five years. A Health Investment grant is intended to provide enabling research support for an autonomous early career investigator who is taking, or has recently taken, a substantive position. Grants are awarded by Perpetual, Trustee of the Foundations, on the recommendation of a dedicated Scientific Advisory Committee.

Ramaciotti Biomedical Research Award

This \$1 million grant is awarded every two years to a group or individual undertaking biomedical research within universities, public hospitals, medical research institutes or other similar organisations. The award funds projects including personnel, equipment, major infrastructure improvements or new laboratories that help an existing, well-funded program of research or enable a major new program to begin. Traditionally, it funds a need that would not attract funding elsewhere. The Ramaciotti Scientific Advisory Committee helps Perpetual select the winner from nominations received.

About Perpetual Philanthropic Services

Perpetual is one of Australia's largest managers and distributors of philanthropic funds with \$2.4 billion in funds under advice (as at 30 June 2016). Perpetual is trustee for more than 1,000 [charitable trusts and endowments](#) and provides individuals and families with advice on establishing charitable foundations and structured giving programs. Perpetual also assists charities and not-for-profit organisations with [investment advice and management](#).

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