

vitality

Spring 2021

**Your kindness
has helped
vulnerable
children and
teenagers**

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Austin
HEALTH

Royal Talbot patients head to Tokyo Paralympics

Austin Health's Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre (RTRC) is dedicated to providing the best rehabilitation services in Australia, complemented by creative therapies including art, music and horticulture

The RTRC is a specialist state-wide provider of intensive rehabilitation programs, providing comprehensive support services to people with a wide range of disabilities.

Recently, a large contingent of former patients were selected for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics.

The group included half the Australian wheelchair rugby team (the Steelers) and another nine players competing in tennis, basketball, shooting, equestrian, athletics, sailing and hand cycling.

This was former patient Josh Hose's third Paralympics with the Steelers.

Josh was in a car accident in 2005 and suffered serious spinal, head and chest injuries, a collapsed lung and brain swelling. His injuries were so severe, a priest came and gave him his last rites.

"When I went to Talbot, this was when I was a bit more coherent and the reality hit home," Josh says.

His main goal was shifting into a different mindset to gain some independence, and then he was introduced to wheelchair rugby by watching the Victorian state team train.

"When I saw it, I knew that I wanted to be part of it, and I was just fortunate I was able to get into it," he says.

"It gave me a bit of a foundation, and I owe rugby a lot."

There are close links with creative therapies offered and the more traditional rehabilitation activities supporting people as they recover from spinal cord injury, stroke and other acquired brain injuries and amputation. Creative therapies address the functional, emotional and cognitive rehabilitation of patients like these Paralympians as they work towards their goals.

Royal Talbot's Manager of Community Integration and Leisure Services, Salvatore Dema, says that seeing past patients representing Australia in Tokyo is significant.

"Often we don't get to see where people end up," he says.

"This is a great chance to reflect on how the work you do, no matter if it is directly with patients or just keeping the place running, creates a service and an environment that allows people to be the best they can be, and sometimes the ripples become waves."

You can support our creative therapies program by making a donation at austin.org.au/donate.

A message from Adam Horsburgh

This year COVID-19 has dominated our activities as we continue to play a pivotal role in supporting the community through the global pandemic. I am proud of the incredible work being done by everyone at Austin Health in providing COVID services like testing, vaccination, contact tracing and case management through our North Eastern Public Health Unit, as well as the usual care we provide.

Since early this year we have been leading the rollout of the vaccination program for Melbourne's North East, in collaboration with St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, Northern Health and Eastern Health. Between March and mid-August we had administered over 127,000 doses at Austin Health and over 436,000 doses across the north-east region. This has been an incredible effort from our teams across all sites. We are so grateful to our community for stepping up to get vaccinated. Vaccination bookings can be made by calling the Victorian Department of Health on 1800 675 398.

As a major health service helping thousands of people every day, we don't always get to see our patients thriving after receiving care with us. It was incredible for us to see many former patients of our Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre participate in this year's Paralympics in Tokyo. Read more about these amazing athletes on page 2.

In our inaugural 1000 Minute Challenge, our community joined a large contingent of Austin Health staff as we worked towards better mental and physical health. In doing so, we were also able to raise funds for additional medical equipment that will help us to deliver even better care for patients and families. Read more about what was made possible on page 10.

Our generous community also supported our recent mental health appeal, enabling us to help vulnerable young patients recover more quickly. You can read more about how your community has helped on page 4.

There have been many other highlights and achievements over the past few months. Thanks to the kindness of supporters like you, I am proud to be able to share some of these in this edition of *Vitality*.

Thank you for your generosity and support of our health service.

Stay safe.

With gratitude,



Adam Horsburgh
Chief Executive Officer



Thanks to you, children and teenagers will recover faster from mental illness



Earlier this year, you showed incredible compassion for young people suffering with mental illness.

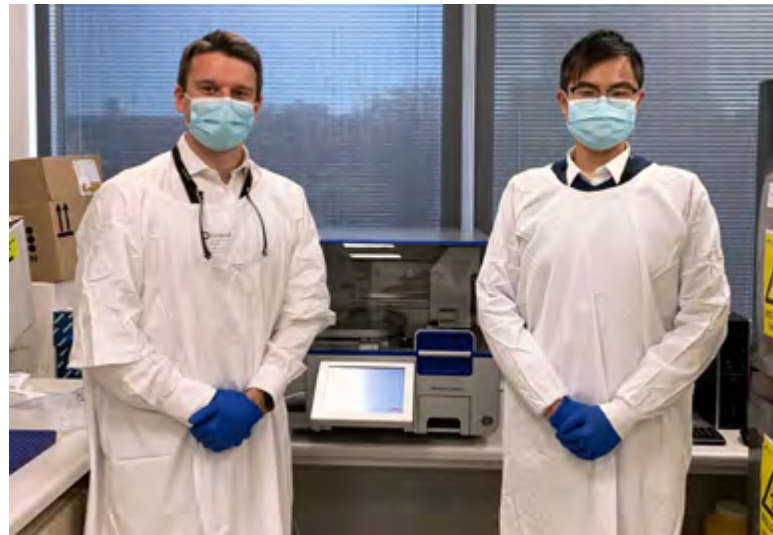
Thanks to you, specialised spaces have been created and new sensory equipment is available to help reduce anxiety and distress in young patients.

Weighted toys will be used as sensory tools, to reduce feelings of anxiety and to stimulate the release of brain chemicals that have a naturally calming effect.

Welcoming and bright furniture will create a playful, warm and inviting environment for patients and families. This furniture is also made of specially designed materials to ensure the environment is safe if a patient is in distress.



Groundbreaking research and better care for liver patients – thanks to you!



“
Thank you for supporting vulnerable children, teenagers and their families. Particularly now when more young people are suffering with mental illnesses. Your support makes a big difference.”

– Hannah Bloom, Divisional Director, Mental Health

Research has shown that when a young person with a mental illness feels secure and comfortable in their environment, their anxiety and distress is reduced. They are also more likely to respond better to treatment and recover faster. Thank you for making this possible.

We look forward to keeping you updated in the coming months about the impact of your kindness.

Last year, we asked for your help to purchase game-changing equipment for our Liver Transplant Unit.

Thanks to people like you, the Unit was able to purchase the QIACube Connect machine, a fully automated and digitised robot.

This groundbreaking machine enables our researchers to extract DNA from blood samples nine times faster than before.

It also helps to eliminate the risk of human error that comes with manual processing, therefore generating higher quality results.

Your support means that some liver patients will also be able to avoid undergoing invasive biopsies, which can be risky, painful, and can mean lengthy trips for patients who have to travel to Melbourne from regional areas.

Thank you for your amazing support. You have made a real difference for liver transplant patients now and into the future.

Running for a reason

Why Ruzdi decided to go the extra mile and give back



We're so lucky to have a dedicated community who generously raise funds to help our staff, patients and families. People just like you, who are kind and passionate, and care deeply about healthcare, education and research.

Ruzdi Vukovic is one of those people. His sister had a liver and kidney transplant at the Austin Hospital when she was 15 years old. She sadly passed away in 2008, but Ruzdi says that the amazing team at Austin, in particular the liver and kidney transplant units, did an outstanding job of improving her quality of life.

In 2021, in honour of his sister and as a way to thank Austin Health, Ruzdi decided to raise funds and run his very first half marathon.

"I'm grateful that I'm fit and healthy and able to challenge myself in this way to support the Austin Health team, who save lives."

Ruzdi signed up for Run Melbourne, and even though the event was cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions, he remained committed to his goal, completing the run virtually.

"I did the run solo, but I had my sister in mind throughout the duration - spurring me on," he says.

Although fundraising was initially outside of his comfort zone, Ruzdi was so excited to see donations and support coming in from friends and family.

"It's really nice to know that people out there genuinely care about those who are vulnerable and requiring medical care. It wasn't about me anymore; it was about the patients who are in need," Ruzdi says.

"It's all well worth it - especially post run - knowing you've achieved your fundraising goal. The feeling is priceless."

Thank you so much for going the distance, Ruzdi!

If you're a keen runner, an avid baker, a whiz at party planning, or you'd just like to help patients and their families with your own fundraiser, please get in touch with us. We'd love to hear from you!

**foundation@austin.org.au
03 9496 5753**

One veteran's powerful legacy

Wayne Carswell didn't have an easy life. The son of two World War II veterans had a turbulent childhood and as a young man he was conscripted into the army for the Vietnam War.

Like most Vietnam veterans, Wayne's return home was shrouded in shame and secrecy. Upon arrival in Australia, he and his fellow soldiers were asked not to wear their uniforms as they disembarked the plane. They were not allowed to march alongside veterans of other wars in ANZAC Day parades, and were not celebrated in the way that WWI and WWII veterans were. This treatment of Vietnam veterans continued for over 20 years after the war, and significantly impacted the mental health of many veterans and their families.

As a result, Wayne suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and struggled with an addiction to alcohol. He was treated for many years on Ward 17 at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, and it was there at the Repat that he found a safe haven for the first time. He was cared for by social workers and clinicians, and

he made friends with staff, volunteers and fellow veterans at the hospital while he was an inpatient. He found joy and comfort in the company of other veterans and these connections enriched his final years of life.

Having benefited greatly from the care he received at the Repat, Wayne wanted to give something back. He decided to leave a gift in his Will to benefit veterans like him, and to support the place that had become his sanctuary.

"Without hesitation, Wayne knew it was the right thing to do. He saw this as an extension of the care and for the people he had met at the Repat," says Repat's Veteran Liaison Officer, Robert Winther.

Wayne's powerful legacy to people living with PTSD will benefit veterans and the people who care for them.

"It's something we can all consider doing when planning our Wills - what will our legacy be? No matter the size of the gift, it will make an impact and shape the future of quality care and the lives of patients at Austin Health," says Debbie Shiell, Director Austin Health Foundation.



If you or your loved ones would like to consider leaving a gift to Austin Health in your Will, please contact:

Elizabeth Veal,
Gifts in Wills Manager
0430 547 876
Elizabeth.Veal@austin.org.au

Thank you!

Your kind words and messages of support are greatly appreciated by healthcare workers



Thank you for your amazing support for healthcare workers!

“We are proud of you all. Thank you for all you are doing during these challenging times.”

- Melissa

“Keep up your good work. You are real-life heroes.”

- Wasina

“Love you nurses and doctors!”

- Jennifer

“Thank you for your amazing resilience, hard work and smiles! Keep up the amazing job you all do!”

- Jeff

“In this world of froth and bubble two things stand like stone. Kindness in another’s troubles. Courage in your own.”

- Jean

A Centre of Excellence built on philanthropy

Austin Health was built on generosity and philanthropy. Prominent philanthropist Elizabeth Austin contributed a donation towards our first hospital premises in 1882, and ever since the act of giving has been a part of who we are.

Over 135 years after Elizabeth's transformational gift, her great-great-grand daughter Ruby Jessie Light continued the family tradition with a generous gift of her own.

In 2018, philanthropic donations including a bequest from Ruby, made the Centre of Excellence in Respiratory and Sleep Medicine possible at Austin Health.

Combining the strengths of the Department of Respiratory and Sleep Medicine and the Institute for Breathing and Sleep, this facility helps to improve patient care, accelerate research discoveries, and transform medical education.

The Centre brings together previously fragmented laboratory, ward and research areas. This ensures healthcare teams and researchers can provide patients with a one-stop-shop for all of their care needs.



Since the Centre of Excellence was opened, Austin Health's Department of Respiratory and Sleep Medicine team have received several prestigious awards from the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ), the Australian and New Zealand Society for Respiratory Science (ANZSRS) and the Australia Pacific Society for Respirology (APSR).

The Centre of Excellence team is dedicated to providing the best possible care for patients with chronic respiratory illnesses, especially now as we continue to face the challenges of a global pandemic.

Stay tuned in the coming months for an exciting opportunity to help the Centre of Excellence team make care even more tailored and accessible for vulnerable patients.

Visit our online gift shop today!

www.austin.org.au/giftshop

 @austingifts - Use code SPRING2021

**10% OFF
EVERYTHING!**

Challenge accepted!

Taking on the 1000 Minute Challenge for better health and to support healthcare heroes



Austin Health's inaugural virtual event, the 1000 Minute Challenge, took place in March.

The challenge asked participants to complete 1000 minutes of exercise in a month (roughly 30 minutes a day) for better physical and mental health, and to show their support and solidarity with healthcare workers.

This event was an exciting opportunity for Austin Health to work closely with our healthcare and community partners, and to lead the way for better health outcomes for the community we serve.

Our amazing staff and community stepped up to the challenge in a big way.

Nearly 1,500 participants clocked up an impressive 1.2 million collective minutes. Participants walked, ran, swam, cycled (and more), for better health and to show their support for their healthcare heroes.

Thanks to your amazing generosity, over \$250,000 was raised for additional medical equipment, including vital signs monitors, ECG machines and physiotherapy equipment, to help staff across the hospital provide even better care for patients.

Move with us in 2022!



The 1000 Minute Challenge will be back from 1–31 March 2022

Take on the challenge for your health and your healthcare heroes. You can choose any activity you enjoy that gets your heart beating faster and muscles working harder. It's free to join and you can sign up on your own or with a team!

Register your interest

Register your interest now and be the first to know when registrations for Austin Health's 1000 Minute Challenge open.

1000minutechallenge.org.au



Have you been vaccinated against COVID-19?

- The vaccine is free and safe
- It will stop you from getting very sick and spreading COVID to others
- Pfizer is safe for pregnant women
- It will help avoid lockdowns in the future

Book an appointment today

Call 1800 675 398 or book online at www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au



Creating a more home-like environment for dementia patients

Thanks to the generous support of the Danks Trust, we have been able to improve the hospital living environment for dementia patients at Austin Health

This evidence-based upgrade, using dementia-friendly design principles, helped to make the environment more home-like for patients.

The new design aims to create an environment that will also provide a sense of comfort for people who may become distressed or agitated in unfamiliar surroundings, as well as promoting meaningful engagement with patients, and increased accessibility and safety for staff, patients and families.

With improvements such as therapy dolls and accessible garden beds, support from the Danks Trust has had a noticeable positive impact on the environment.

This re-designed living environment means an improved hospital experience for over 500 patients with dementia and their families each year.

“

We had a patient who helped to plant spring onions and strawberries in the wheelchair-accessible garden beds. He had spent a month on the ward and felt his decreased hearing and declining mobility meant he couldn't do a lot of leisure groups. When he was able to sit in a chair and comfortably access a raised garden bed, he was so excited. He even sat with the plants he planted every day in the warm sun and chatted to whoever passed by about their growth and progress.”

– Kate Costigan, Divisional Therapist, Ward 9

