

The IAS would like to acknowledge the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, the traditional owners of the land on which RPA Hospital stands on and pay our respects to their Elders both past and present.

SUMMER 2022

Welcome to the 2022 Summer edition of the IAS Newsletter. In this edition, we've compiled some exciting updates from around the grounds plus an exciting interview with Dr Nipu Jayatilleke, the A/Director of the Sydney Southwest Surgical Skills Network (SSN).

As we come to the end of another busy year, we're thrilled to be safely reintroducing face-to-face events and meetings at the IAS. In December alone we hosted three highly anticipated events including the SpikNing PhD Graduate Ceremony, our Research Impact Think Tank and a launch event celebrating the partnership between Vantari Virtual Reality and the IAS. We look forward to hosting more in-person events in 2023, stay tuned.

As always you can follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and our [website](#).

We hope you enjoy the newsletter and have a wonderful Holiday Season!

SURGEON SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW

This Summer, Dr Nipu Jayatilleke, A/Director of the SSN, details why surgery was the perfect career choice for her.

What would you say is your number one value in life and in your work?

I grew up in a Buddhist family where we believed in the principle of 'ahimsa', which can be very loosely summarised as an intention or principle of compassion and nonviolence. In practice, this means respecting yourself, as well as others, and the world around you. It is the foundation for how I am raising my own children now, too.

When was it that you realised you wanted to be a surgeon?

It would have been when I was in late high school because I was torn between art school and science/biology. There were a lot of factors at play for how I ultimately decided though – I appreciated the human body, I've always been a people person and I also did a lot of volunteering as a child so I think this all came together and led me to pursue medicine. When I attended an operating theatre for the first time as a first-year medical student, I knew surgery was my path. I love the technical challenge, and the (not always recognised) relative creativity in problem solving that surgery entails.

As for specialising in breast surgery, I didn't have any particular interest in this for a while. I did a term in breast surgery during my training and that's when I realised how much I loved working with, and getting positive outcomes, for women.

What innovation in the field of Breast Surgery and Education excites you?

We recently created a novel silicone breast model, which allowed us to teach advanced therapeutic mammoplasty techniques to post graduate fellows. The heroes behind this project were Kai Cheng, Aaron Luo, A/Professor David Storey, Rosa Fung and Sarah Whereat who helped to design and create multiple iterations of a breast mould, which we could then hand pour silicon into, to create a total of 40 large breast models. It was an epic task given the prototype development and testing, turnaround time, silicone supply shortages, and time to pour models etc. as well as transporting all the models to Brisbane for a Breast Surgery Society ANZ conference in October.

What's the most important thing you've learnt from the patients and families you work with?

The resilience of the human spirit, and a regular reality check on prioritising the things that really matter in life – family, friends, and all the things that spark joy for you. It's not always easy, and I am definitely a work in progress with respect to work/life balance.

If you could go back in time and see your first-year-of-university-self, what advice would you give yourself?

Slow down! Enjoy the journey. Take the interesting looking path and don't be afraid of falling because the getting up part is what will make you into the surgeon and woman that you are today.

What would you like your legacy to be in the surgical field?

For patients, I hope that I have given them agency and empowerment through a difficult time.

For future surgeons, particularly other women, I hope I will be able to have made the path more equitable, accessible, and achievable.

MODELS FOR BRISBANE BREAST SURGERY SOCIETY ANZ

As mentioned in Dr Nipu's Spotlight Interview, the IAS Education team created 40 breast moulds for the Brisbane Breast Surgery Society ANZ conference. Kai Cheng utilised the 3D printer to create the moulds and A/Professor David Storey developed the recipe for the silicone breast models. This was a collaborative innovation project so other notable mentions go to Rosa Fung from the IAS, Sarah Whereat from the Sydney South West Surgical Skills Network and Aaron Luo from the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse.



IAS SPIKNING CEREMONY

On the 2 of December 2022, the IAS hosted its inaugural Spikning Ceremony. For those unacquainted with the Spikning Ceremony, or the 'thesis nailing ceremony', it is a tradition that dates back over 600 years. A German monk, Martin Luther, famously nailed 95 theses to the door of a church kicking off the Protestant Reformation movement. The act of thesis nailing has been passed on and performed in universities all over the world.

We celebrated six RPA staff members who have completed PhDs since the creation of the IAS in 2014 with A/Professor Charbel Sandroussi, the IAS Director of Clinical Research, adopting the role of Master of Ceremonies. It gave the graduates an opportunity to share their ideas and attendees could read their work and celebrate their tenacity and success.

We'd like to take this opportunity to recognise the following graduates and their completed PhDs:

- A/Professor Cherry Koh: 'Decision-making in pelvic exenteration: clinician, patient and societal perspectives'
- Dr Kate McBride: 'Surgical outcomes for patients with serious mental illness'
- Dr Rebecca Venchiarutti: 'Pathways to diagnosis and treatment of head and neck cancer: outcomes and experiences of patients in NSW'
- A/Professor Payal Mukherjee: 'Translation of 3D technologies in personalised medicine on Otolaryngology'
- Dr Sophie Hogan: 'Expanding the evidence base for perioperative nutrition management in pelvic exenteration surgery'

- Dr David Clark: 'Early identification of Anastomotic Leak in Colorectal Intestinal Surgery by Two Novel Biomarkers'.

Professor Michael Solomon was also celebrated for completing two doctorates since the IAS' creation in 2014. These are titled 'Clinical trials in surgery: determining feasibility, preferences, equipoise and performance of trials in minimally invasive colorectal surgery' and 'Pelvic exenteration surgery: the evolution of radical surgical techniques for advanced and recurrent pelvic malignancy.'

For those interested in learning more about their work, hard copies of their thesis' are available at the IAS.



IAS THINK TANK: RESEARCH IMPACT

On Friday the 9 of December, the IAS hosted its final Think Tank for 2022. The topic was "Research Impact," an increasingly relevant framework for research projects and grant applications across the world.

Facilitated by Professor Jonathan Clark, the Think Tank brought together an expert range of career researchers, clinicians, health leaders and academics across RPA and the University of Sydney. These included Dr Ed Hendriks, Professor Paul Bannon, Dr Jean-Frederic Levesque, Professor Timothy Shaw and Professor Gregg Suaning. Unfortunately, Professor Lisa Horvath was unable to join us on the panel but we look forward to more collaboration opportunities with Lisa next year.

These experts explored the following topics.

- Dr Ed Hendriks: Research Impact in Grant Applications
- Professor Paul Bannon: Is impact different in surgery to medicine?
- Dr Jean-Frederic Levesque: How surgeons can partner with health policy experts to impact patient care
- Professor Tim Shaw: Research Program Development
- And Professor Gregg Suaning joined the Q&A Panel discussing how he demonstrates impact in his work and research in neuroprosthesis.

There were some incredibly insightful discussions had between the panel and the audience and some great key areas for consideration moving forward.

We look forward to presenting more new and exciting Think Tanks in 2023.



VANTARI VR CELEBRATION EVENT

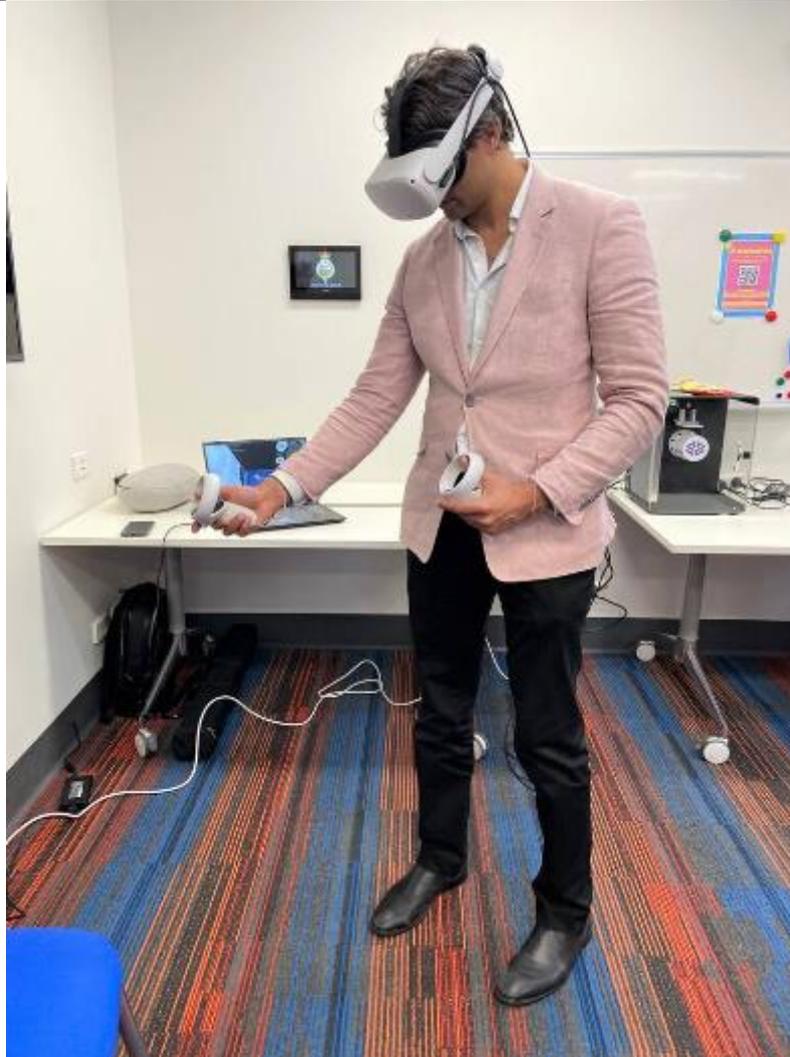
On Wednesday the 14 of December, the IAS hosted its final event of the year, celebrating the new exciting collaboration between the IAS and the Vantari Virtual Reality (VR) team.

Vantari VR are a Sydney-based company founded by Dr Vijay Paul and Dr Nishanth Krishnananthan in 2018. They provide a virtual reality solution that help surgeons, critical care doctors, ED doctors, anesthetists, nurses and allied health professionals practice life-saving surgeries through the use of VR consoles and artificial intelligence. The aim is to help eliminate medical errors and allow clinicians to experience real life surgical scenarios to gain confidence in their skills.

This collaboration marks the first hospital-wide rollout of VR technology for education and training purposes in Australia. Through this partnership, Vantari will be delivering two key modules to our staff including 'Surgical Airways' and 'Tracheostomy' which will play a vital role in furthering RPA's education and expertise in this space. These modules fall under both our Education and Innovation, Value and Thought portfolios.

A/Professor Jonathan Hong welcomed guests to the event and Dr Nishanth Krishnananthan presented on the training program and modules. This was followed by Dr Sharon Carey, IAS Director of Allied Health Surgical Research and Education, who explored the Evaluation Research Framework for the roll out of the training program.

The Vantari Celebration was an interactive event for all guests who attended as they were able to try the consoles for themselves and practice their surgical skills in the virtual environment.



THORACIC SURGICAL EDUCATION DAY

In November, RPA hosted the FLUENT Thoracic Surgical Education Day, involving leading thoracic surgical educators. Dr Christopher Cao, RPA cardiothoracic surgeon, ran the day which was one of the largest Australasian thoracic education events this year, with participating registrars and fellows from across the Asia-Pacific region in attendance.

The agenda covered a range of topics including a case video of a lobe dissection, the clinical evidence and technical steps behind a Segmentectomy, the why and how behind a Robotic Sleeve resection and efficient management of subcentimeter lung cancer in the era of LDCT screening. There was also a discussion about the new horizons in treating non-surgical patients in early stage lung cancer and a case study that addressed the harmonisation between neoadjuvant and adjuvant approaches with surgery.

A list of the event's speakers were:

- Dr Christopher Cao, Australia
- Dr Aneeze DB Ahmed, Singapore
- Professor Chao Yin Kai, Taiwan
- Professor Calvin Ng, Hong Kong
- Professor Chao-Chi Ho, Taiwan
- A/Professor Steven Kao, Australia
- Professor Franca Melfi, Italy
- Professor Bernard Park, USA



RESEARCH GRANTS

Professor Jonathan Clark and A/Professor Payal Mukherjee, were recently awarded the '2021 MRFF Stem Cell Therapies Mission Grant'. They received almost \$7 million of funding to help develop novel cartilage-based stem cell therapies that will revolutionise the treatment of joint diseases, such as osteoarthritis and facial disfigurement, through a project called ARISTOCRAT.

TEAM CHANGES

New team member: Clare O'Rourke, Marketing & Communications Manager at the IAS

Clare O'Rourke is the new Marketing & Communications Manager who joined the IAS in October 2022. Clare manages the growth of the IAS social media accounts, organises IAS events, improves systems related to marketing and works closely with the RPA surgical departments to create content.

Clare has a business background, completing a Bachelor of Accounting at the University of Technology Sydney in 2018 and also completed a two year Chartered Accounting (ANZ) professional qualification. Clare has previously worked in finance, marketing and communications positions at large multi-national companies and a technology start-up. She brings a fresh perspective to the team regarding branding and processes. She has a passion for storytelling, channeling her creativity and social justice issues.

Welcome Clare, the IAS is very excited to have you on board.



RECENT REPORTS

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IAS E-Updates

If you have an item you would like to be considered for inclusion in our e-update, please email us at SLHD-RPAIAS@health.nsw.gov.au

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