



Pioneering Music Therapy programs at the Royal Adelaide Hospital

In this edition of the Autumn Newsletter, we are proud to introduce to our loyal donors, Dr Patsy Tan – a phenomenal researcher and the pioneer of Music Therapy programs at the Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH).

Dr Patsy Tan is a bilingual United States of America board-certified and Australian registered Music Therapist. She has lengthy experience working in multiple countries as a clinician, clinical supervisor, researcher, educator and of course, a music therapist.

For patients receiving in-patient care at the Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH), Music Therapy is a relatively new but deeply personal form of treatment. Used in conjunction with required medical care, it is quickly becoming an essential tool of a patient's treatment and healing journey.

Music Therapy helps ease pain alongside medication, reduce anxiety and depression, lift and stabilise mood, support physical and speech rehabilitation, improve sleep quality, and release muscle tension. These outcomes are not insignificant — they play a powerful role in a patient's recovery and wellbeing in some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives during their in-patient stay at the RAH.

The Hospital Research Foundation Group (THRFG) has provided funding for Music Therapy in South Australian hospitals since 2018 and has further committed to funding Music Therapy roles within the RAH, including Patsy's, until the end of 2030. Research is now essential to help us further continue this vital program.

Please donate TODAY to Music Therapy Research!

Story continues on page 2.

Your support will help fund Music Therapy research at the Royal Adelaide Hospital providing comfort, dignity, hope and healing to patients and families when they need it most.

Visit: www.rahresearchfund.com.au/support-us/music-therapy or scan the QR code to donate today.

Thank you. Your generosity will change lives.



A message from Dr Monica Kerr

Director of Research,
Central Adelaide
Local Health Network



Hello Supporters,

I'm delighted to introduce myself as the new Director of Research for the Central Adelaide Local Health Network (CALHN), which includes South Australia's premier Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH). Research and innovation are at the heart of delivering real healthcare benefits for our community now and into the future - and I'm pleased to connect with you as part of that shared endeavour.

My career has been shaped by a passion for enabling high quality research with real world impact. After completing my PhD at Harvard Medical School, I spent more than a decade in senior leadership positions supporting the systems and services that enable research to thrive - including training emerging research leaders and ensuring that research is conducted safely, responsibly and with integrity. Following my time at what is now Adelaide University, I was drawn to CALHN by its unique strength in bringing researchers and clinicians together - a place where ideas can be translated into better outcomes for patients.

Our researchers and clinicians collaborate across a broad range of priorities - from cancer care and personalised medicine to healthy ageing, Aboriginal health, surgery and intelligent health solutions, including responsible AI. My focus is on enhancing the support services that enable CALHN to achieve its research ambitions, and on strengthening our partnership with Adelaide University.

Funding high quality research is increasingly challenging, particularly in the early stages where promising ideas often struggle to secure traditional grants. This is where donor support makes an extraordinary difference. Your generosity helps researchers take those critical first steps -testing new ideas, gathering early evidence and building the foundations for discoveries that can transform care at the RAH.

In this edition, you'll read about Dr Patsy Tan's groundbreaking work in music therapy, and reflections from Ian Tindall, Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee. Each story demonstrates the dedication, creativity and care that define our research community - and the vital role you play in making this work possible.

Thank you for your continued partnership in advancing research at the RAH.

Pioneering Music Therapy programs at the Royal Adelaide Hospital

Continued from cover

Imagine, for a moment, being admitted to hospital with an illness, injury or condition you never asked for. You feel frightened, frustrated, unwell and in pain. Your loved ones can't be by your side around the clock, even though that is what you long for, and perhaps need, the most.

Then Patsy arrives at your door. She sits quietly with you in your room. She asks what music you love. She listens. And then she plays. In that moment, Patsy creates a space that feels safe, human and nurturing. For countless patients, this Music Therapy experience brings profound relief. Research demonstrates the powerful emotional and psychological effects music has on the brain and body — yet the true value of what Patsy offers is often felt more deeply than words can explain.

Before Patsy's work, Music Therapy had never been part of the Royal Adelaide Hospital's Allied Health programs. In 2018, through a collaboration between THRFG's affiliate, the Centre for Creative Health, and the University of Adelaide's Elder Conservatorium of Music, Patsy pioneered South Australia's first hospital-based music therapy program in the General Medicine ward as a pilot study, supported by a research grant from THRFG. The research study was completed in 2019 and was published in 2020. With the continued support of funding partner THRFG she secured a full-time music therapist position, enabling the program to expand to hospital-wide in January 2020. By the end of 2021, THRFG provided additional funding for a second full-time music therapist position to meet the increasing demand for music therapy at the RAH and at the same time to support the expansion of the program to The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (TQEH).

Music Therapy at the RAH during COVID-19 lockdown

During the lockdowns, patients were forced to face illness and in some cases, death alone. Families were unable to be present. In those final moments, Patsy was often the only non-medical or nursing human presence allowed in the room. She sat beside patients as they passed away, playing music chosen especially for them based on their personal preferences. These final moments were recorded and later shared with the patient's families, offering them a comfort and connection to their loved one when it was needed most.

At the same time, Patsy also supported frontline nursing staff, who carried an unimaginable emotional burden during the pandemic. For many, her music became a rare moment of light, hope and calm during an extraordinarily dark time.

As music drifted through the RAH corridors, patients and staff began requesting it in their own wards. Today, Music Therapy reaches patients across several wards of the RAH including Geriatric Medicine, Neurology and Neurorehabilitation, Cardiology, Burns, Orthopaedics, Plastic Surgery, Oncology, Renal, Trauma, ICU and more.



Patsy and her team need your help to support research! Donate now to Music Therapy research.

One of Patsy's most meaningful initiatives is the Heartbeat Project, developed for patients living with advanced heart failure and facing probable end of life. Through this project, a patient's heartbeat is recorded and then woven into a personalised musical composition, co-created with the patient and Patsy — a living legacy for the patient and a keepsake for their family.

The purpose of the Heartbeat Project case study was to examine whether heartbeat-based music composition, used as a legacy intervention in music therapy, reduces depression and anxiety of patients and their loved ones, thereby providing meaning and purpose to the lives of patients facing a probable end-of-life decision.

Various assessment tools were used to evaluate patients and their loved ones awareness of music therapy and legacy creation, experiences with music therapy and heartbeat composition, and their overall hospital stay. The results showed a reduction in patients depression and anxiety related to their medical prognosis. Music Therapy was found to alleviate anxiety and promote physical relaxation, with heartbeat-based legacy composition in music therapy as a notable meaningful keepsake. The intervention also provided the case study patient with a new sense of purpose and meaning in life. These positive experiences have contributed to an overall comfort level throughout patients in-patient hospitalization at the RAH.

Dr Patsy Tan's recently published paper, "The legacy of heart failure - A case study on a patient's experience composing heartbeat-inspired music" marks a significant professional and personal milestone, reinforcing the clinical value of Music Therapy and its lasting impact.

Over the years, donor generosity to support Music Therapy through the RAH Research Fund has helped fund a piece of vital equipment, a digital stethoscope used in clinical practice. Now, Patsy's vision is to expand this work further purchasing new instruments and supporting research by having a music therapy research assistant.

Her next project focuses on stroke patients with Broca's aphasia, who have lost their ability to speak but retain the ability to sing. Working alongside speech therapists, the neurorehabilitation team, and researchers from the Adelaide University, Patsy aims to establish an inpatient aphasia choir together with her music therapy colleague at TQEH. This choir aims to help patients relearn speech by using singing, rhythm, and tapping to help patients regain speech by stimulating and engaging undamaged right hemisphere to compensate for functions lost in the damaged left-hemisphere, and gradually moving from melodic phrases to normal speech, a technique grounded in Melodic Intonation Therapy (MIT) principles. It is a long, complex and demanding process, but one filled with hope for those whose voices have been taken from them.

This work takes time, skilled teams, and resources.

Patsy and her team need your help.

Your donation today will help fund Music Therapy research at the Royal Adelaide Hospital – providing evidence of the benefits of this therapy - comfort, dignity, hope and healing to patients and families when they need it most.

"In hospital the patient can't choose their treatment, their food, their clothes.... They didn't choose to be sick. But they can choose music. The smile on their face when they hear my music makes every day worthwhile and drives me to continue my work."

Dr Patsy Tan

Donate today to Music Therapy research

Your money will go DIRECTLY towards Dr Patsy Tan's research and vision to establish a team to help stroke patients find their voice and gain back their ability to speak!

Visit: www.rahresearchfund.com.au/support-us/music-therapy or scan the QR code to donate today.

Thank you. Your generosity will change lives.



In this edition of the 2026 Autumn Newsletter, we are delighted to present the Central Adelaide Local Health Network Human Research Ethics Committee (CALHN HREC) Chair: **Mr Ian Tindall**

Mr Ian Tindall and HREC

Ian is a Pharmacist by profession, who came to be involved in clinical trials and the **Central Adelaide Local Health Network Human Research Ethics Committee (CALHN HREC)** for over 30 years prior. For the past 8 years, Ian has been serving as the dedicated and reliable HREC Chair. For those who are not aware, HREC was established after World War 2 to provide protection for the human element of human research studies. The consideration of ethics and scientific merit when involving human beings in clinical trials and research studies is paramount.

Ian's position as HREC Chair has granted him the opportunity to witness how medical science has evolved over the years. The process of having a clinical trial drug pass through HREC involves stringent approvals followed by successful clinical trials in humans, with the result being effective lifesaving drugs administered to Pharmacies, made available to patients in need.

COVID-19

Reminiscing on highlights and challenges of his career and involvement with HREC, Ian ponders the COVID-19 pandemic and the direct challenges that arose in the Healthcare industry due to the virus. In his own words:

"The COVID epidemic was a real challenge. Many existing drugs and treatments were put forward for trial as possible COVID treatments. It was a challenge for the HREC to reject many of these proposed trials as unsafe or having no scientific merit when there were limited treatment alternatives. The CALHN HREC did its job however by protecting potential participants from possible harm."

What arose as an obvious strength from the COVID-19 pandemic, was the true dedication, persistence and patience of all Healthcare Professionals to providing safety and care for their patients. Ian witnessed this daily throughout the crisis.



Over the course of his 30-year career in HREC, Ian has been astonished at the evolution of medical science, moving from chemical drugs to gene and biological therapies of all types. The level of access participants in clinical trials and therapy to new and exciting medical treatments is truly phenomenal.

A Personal Note

What inspires Ian to keep going is the passion of all those involved, and the developments of medicine that reach patients like never before.

The advice Ian has for others, stems from his lengthy experience in actively serving RAAF Reserves. To keep himself and young officers motivated in times of what was often despair, he acknowledged a quote from Calvin Coolidge former President of the USA.

"Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan 'Press On!' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race."

On the personal front, when Ian is not working in his permanent role as HREC Chair, he enjoys catching up on sleep and collecting pharmacy items and old books. That is, when he has a moment free from his grandchildren!



Christmas Thank You Event 2025

Early December 2025, the team at the Royal Adelaide Hospital Research Fund enjoyed a wonderful afternoon connecting with both new and long-standing donors, along with their guests. The presence of our community donors such as CRABS, Myra Holzapfel, Roger Horne and Jan Reu truly made the day special.

It was also a pleasure to reconnect with the dedicated staff and researchers who joined us.

In line with our current appeal for Intensive Care Unit, which supports research into treating traumatic brain injury using a vitamin C-like drug, an insightful presentation was delivered by Prof Mark Plummer and warmly received by guests. Professor Sherree Smith from Nursing also shared a compelling and informative overview of her work within CAHLN. We were delighted to also have our CEO, Professor Emma McMahon who graciously joined us for the afternoon.



Associate Professor Mark Plummer, ICU Head of Research and Innovation RAH.



L:R - Dr Emma McMahon, CALHN CEO, Associate Professor Mark Plummer, ICU Head of Research and Innovation RAH, Professor Sherree Smith, CALHN Professor of Nursing, and Dr Monica Kerr, CALHN Director of Research



Representatives of CRAB, RAH Research Fund community donors.

“Anything is possible with a kind heart and a strong voice.”



Here at the Royal Adelaide Hospital Research Fund, we proudly support and encourage our Community Fundraisers! We are pleased to introduce you to Mary Tarzia OAM - a dedicated and tireless Breast Cancer Community Fundraiser.

Driven from her own personal diagnosis with breast cancer in 2004, and again in 2015, Mary strongly advocates for breast cancer survivors, raising money to improve cancer patient care via the Faith Hope Charity fund at the Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH). Her mission is clear – to support Breast Cancer patients on their journey to wellness in whatever way possible by raising funds and awareness enabling Breast Cancer researchers to further find cure for cancer.

Please donate now to the Faith Hope Charity Fund.

Over the years, Mary has raised more than \$1 million to support and enhance cancer patient care. One notable example is her generous donation in 2013 of six Paxman cold caps, purchased using funds she raised. These cold caps help reduce hair loss for women undergoing chemotherapy, making a meaningful difference during a challenging time. Mary was proud to support this as the RAH became the first public hospital to introduce this technology, made possible through her dedication and fundraising efforts.

Beyond this, Mary has also funded vital equipment, for example a tattoo device that assists surgeons during the final stages of breast reconstruction. Through her ongoing commitment, Mary has enabled the delivery of the

B.R.E.A.T.H.E. program at the RAH onsite EFM gym, supporting the wellbeing and recovery of patients through exercise.

In June 2016 Mary was Knighted as a Dame of Grace through the St John Jerusalem Knights of Malta. On June 13, 2022, Mary was awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM), in the Queen’s Birthday Honours list for service to Charitable organisations.

Mary’s path to raising funds has not always been easy – she has dedicated numerous hours of time and personal commitment to the task. On occasions she experienced challenges but managed to pick herself up, found her strength and continued to advocate for herself and for women in her position.

“Without the support of the community, family and friends, this charity would not have been so successful. A small contribution through their time or donation can have a powerful and positive improvement to patients going through a traumatic journey. The generosity received has assisted us in raising much needed funds for both medical research and patient amenities for women diagnosed with breast cancer.” Mary Tarzia, OAM

Ready to explore the possibilities of Community Fundraising? Contact us:

T: (08) 7074 1445

E: contactus@rahresearchfund.com.au



B.R.E.A.T.H.E. at EFM Gym, onsite at the Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH)

2018 marked the commencement of the B.R.E.A.T.H.E. – **Breast Cancer Reconditioning program, Amidst and Therapy** – program funded by Mary Tarzia OAM, via the Faith Hope Charity fund.

The B.R.E.A.T.H.E. program is offered at the EFM Gym to patients undergoing chemotherapy treatment for Breast Cancer at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. Participating in a structured exercise routine offers patients undertaking chemotherapy an attempt to offset the harsh side effects, in turn gently improving their health and wellbeing.

Grace, Eliza and Lina are breast cancer survivors who utilised the B.R.E.A.T.H.E. program at the RAH EFM Gym.

“I found the B.R.E.A.T.H.E. Program when I was newly diagnosed. The usual gyms I attended felt overstimulating, overcrowded and no longer compatible with my fitness level. From the minute I entered the gym with Ellen, I was embraced and felt supported to confidently engage in meaningful exercise. The group of women I was surrounded with became a lifeline. We have laughed, cried and shared a hard journey together. EFM and B.R.E.A.T.H.E. provided a routine and sense of control that I was doing something to help myself, when so much else was unknown. I am extremely grateful for Ellen and the group for the benefits the program has provided me mentally and physically throughout my treatment.”
Grace

“The B.R.E.A.T.H.E. program offers a unique opportunity to exercise with trainers who really understand the toll cancer treatment takes and have specialised knowledge of the benefits exercise can offer. Exercise is one benefit we can offer ourselves in treatment, to have this opportunity to attend is invaluable. I feel stronger, more positive, and supported for attending. B.R.E.A.T.H.E. has benefited in my recovery more than I can say.” Eliza

“I underwent chemotherapy treatment in 2023, and had the pleasure of meeting Ellen from RAH EFM, who warmly welcomed me, introduced me to the exercise program and other participants who were in a similar situation as I was. I attended the gym often, the support offered from the women there was invaluable to my mental health and self-belief that I could get through my treatment and feel better, more like me again! I thank all the support staff at EFM and RAH, with all my heart, for helping me through my rough journey as a breast cancer patient.” Lina

It is worthwhile to note that two men who are breast cancer survivors have participated in the B.R.E.A.T.H.E. program since it was established.

If you are interested in the services of RAH EFM, please contact EFM Club Manager Ellen Nobbs on 0419 036 730, or visit www.efm.net.au/breathe for more information.



It's 2026, and here's to 45 Years of Transforming Lives

Established in 1981, 2026 marks the **Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH) Research Fund's 45th Anniversary.**

Stay tuned for more information regarding our special milestone birthday. We are thrilled to continue this journey with you, our loyal donors, and making the next 45 years even more impactful!

