



RBWH

Research Report 2011

Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital
Metro North Hospital and Health Service

Queensland Health



Queensland
Government



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Produced by

RBWH Marketing and Communications
Lower Ground Floor
Dr James Mayne Building
Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital
Butterfield St, Herston, Qld 4029

Phone: +61 7 3646 8111

Web: www.health.qld.gov.au/rbwh

Editor

Prof. Lawrie W. Powell AC

Photography

Herston Multimedia Unit
RBWH Marketing and Communications
The University of Queensland
Queensland University of Technology
Jamie Hanson
istockphoto.com

Design and typesetting

RBWH Marketing and Communications

Contents

Executive Director's report	
Research Director's report	
Research performance	
RBWH Foundation	
Queensland University of Technology	
The University of Queensland	
Herston Health Sciences Library	
Queensland Institute of Medical Research	
The University of Queensland Centre for Clinical Research	
Human Research Ethics Committee	
Cancer Care Services 13	
Overview and Executive and directing staff 14	
Clinical Haematology and Bone Marrow Transplant Unit 15	
Department of Medical Oncology 18	
Department of Radiation Oncology 21	
Queensland Haemophilia Centre 24	
Nursing 25	
Corporate Services 27	
Overview and Executive and directing staff 28	
Critical Care and Clinical Support Services 29	
Overview and Executive and directing staff 30	
Department of Emergency Medicine 31	
Department of Intensive Care Medicine 34	
Professor Tess Cramond Multidisciplinary Pain Centre 41	
Allied Health Professions 43	
Overview and Executive and directing staff 44	
Department of Nutrition and Dietetics 45	
Department of Occupational Therapy 49	
Department of Physiotherapy 51	
Department of Psychology 53	
Rehabilitation Engineering Centre 54	
Department of Social Work Services 55	
Department of Speech Pathology 57	
Internal Medicine Services 59	
Overview and Executive and directing staff 60	
Department of Cardiology 61	
Department of Clinical Immunology and Allergy 65	
Department of Clinical Pharmacology 66	
Department of Endocrinology 67	
Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology 70	
Genetic Health Queensland 74	
Infectious Diseases Unit 76	
Department of Internal Medicine and Aged Care 81	
Department of Neurology 84	
Department of Nuclear Medicine including Queensland PET Service 88	
Palliative Care Service 90	
Department of Pharmacy 91	
Department of Renal Medicine 94	
Department of Rheumatology 98	
Department of Thoracic Medicine 99	
Medical Imaging Reform Service 100	
Overview and Executive and directing staff 101	
Medical Services 104	
Overview and Executive and directing staff 105	
Centre for Palliative Care Research and Education 106	
Safety and Quality Unit 109	
Metro North Mental Health Services 110	
Overview and Executive and directing staff 111	
Department of Consultation Liaison Psychiatry 112	
Eating Disorder Service 113	
Hospital Alcohol and Drug Service 115	
Inner North Brisbane Mental Health Service 116	
Older Persons' Mental Health Service 119	
Queensland Forensic Mental Health Service 122	
QIMR/RBWH Mental Health Research Division 124	
Nursing and Midwifery Services 126	
Overview and Executive and directing staff 127	
Centre for Clinical Nursing 128	
Surgical and Perioperative Services 131	
Overview and Executive and directing staff 132	
Department of Anaesthetics and Perioperative Medicine 133	
Department of Ear Nose and Throat Surgery 136	
Department of General Surgery 137	
Department of Neurosurgery 138	
Department of Ophthalmology 139	
Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery 140	
Department of Orthopaedic Surgery 143	
Department of Plastics and Reconstructive Surgery 145	
Professor Stuart Pegg Adult Burns Centre 146	
Trauma Service 148	
Department of Urology 150	
Department of Vascular Surgery 153	
Women's and Newborn Services 156	
Overview and Executive and directing staff 157	
Betty Byrne Henderson Women's Health Research Centre 158	
Grantley Stable Neonatal Unit 159	
Department of Gynaecology 162	
Department of Maternity Services 164	
Perinatal Research Centre 170	
Queensland Centre for Gynaecological Cancer 177	
Centre for the Advancement of Clinical Research 179	



Dr David Alcorn
Executive Director,
Royal Brisbane and
Women's Hospital

Executive Director's report

Following another exemplary year at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH), I take great pride in recalling the many achievements of our tireless medical, nursing and allied health clinicians and esteemed researchers from our campus university and research partners.

Research and the resulting advancements in healthcare have always been an expectation of our society and something which we tend to take for granted. For example, we tend to forget that the spectacular eradication or effective treatment of diseases such as smallpox, poliomyelitis and tuberculosis and more recently AIDS have resulted from medical research.

The tenacity of our dedicated researchers and clinicians is evident in the significant increase in research activity across the Herston campus throughout 2011. I am proud to note the record \$2 million allocated for peer-reviewed research by the Private Practice Trust Fund (PPTF) and RBWH Foundation for RBWH staff.

Of particular note are the efforts of the team dedicated to establishing a historic partnership between Queensland Health and Queensland University of Technology (QUT) at Herston – the Australian Centre for Health Services Innovation (AushSI) – with the aim of building research capacity and delivering solutions to important health services challenges.

Special mention must go to Professor Frank Gannon, Director, QIMR, for his leadership and drive to establish the Herston Imaging and Research Facility (HIRF) in collaboration with RBWH, UQ and QUT. Once established, the facility will further enhance our campus partnerships and the capacity and scope for world-leading research on the Herston campus.

This hard work continues to shape RBWH as an Academic Health Sciences Centre and contributes to our vision of research excellence and innovation, education and training of tomorrow's health workforce, and importantly, as always, helping to make a lasting difference in the quality and length of life of Queenslanders.

I would like to personally thank and acknowledge the work of RBWH Director of Research, Professor Lawrie Powell AC, and his team in continuing to lead RBWH in research excellence.

Many other individuals and corporate entities have played a role in once more focusing this wonderful campus of academic, intellectual and scientific endeavour firmly towards enquiry, innovation and healthy competition for research resources.

These tireless contributors include, but are not limited to: Professor Emeritus Mervyn Eadie AO, Chair of the Research Advisory Committee and his team; Dr Conor Brophy, Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and her team; the Clinician Scientists Association; the Research Excellence and Academic Leadership Group; Queensland Pathology (through the Internal Medicine Laboratories at QIMR); our many generous corporate supporters, coordinated through the RBWH Foundation led by Chair, The Honourable Warwick Parer AM and CEO Peter Treseder AM and his energetic team; and the generosity of the Private Practice Trust Fund.

I look forward to another brilliant year ahead as we strive for excellence and innovation in health research at RBWH with the ultimate outcome of course being a higher quality of health care at a sustainable cost.

Dr David Alcorn
Executive Director
Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital



Prof. Lawrie Powell AC
Director, Research
Royal Brisbane and
Women's Hospital

Research Director's report

It is very pleasing to report that the significant increase in research activity and productivity reported in last year's Research Report has continued. This is due in large part to further increased research productivity and grant successes by RBWH staff, active collaborations with The University of Queensland (UQ) and UQCCR research staff, Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and expanding involvement of RBWH clinical researchers with QIMR researchers.

Research funding from peer-reviewed sources such as NHMRC are shown in the graphs on the following page, along with research publications and higher degree students.

A particular highlight of this year was the very successful annual RBWH Healthcare Symposium which focussed on personalised healthcare - an emerging development in medical research that will affect all of human kind. This year's Symposium hosted a large faculty of national and international speakers including Professor Dame Valerie Beral AC from Oxford and Professor Paul Adams from London Ontario, Canada. A special focus was personalised healthcare for cancer patients.

Other noteworthy developments include the expansion of health services research in collaboration with QUT and the establishment of the Herston Imaging Research Facility (HIRF) as detailed in the report.

The increasing collaboration between RBWH and the other institutions on campus and QUT has been mentioned elsewhere, especially our joint efforts with QIMR, UQCCR and QUT. Perhaps the best examples have been the new imaging research facility (see report by Professor Frank Gannon), but also the formation of the joint bioinformatics unit between RBWH and QIMR in which RBWH provides a full-time biostatistician who works with the QIMR Biostatistical Unit, headed by Professor Peter O'Rourke. This is a highly successful development which enables RBWH research staff to access expert professional biostatistical advice promptly.

Another pleasing development on campus has been the increasing clinician-basic scientist partnership which is widely recognised as the most productive force in unravelling the molecular basis of human disease - a fact attested to by numerous Nobel Prize awards.

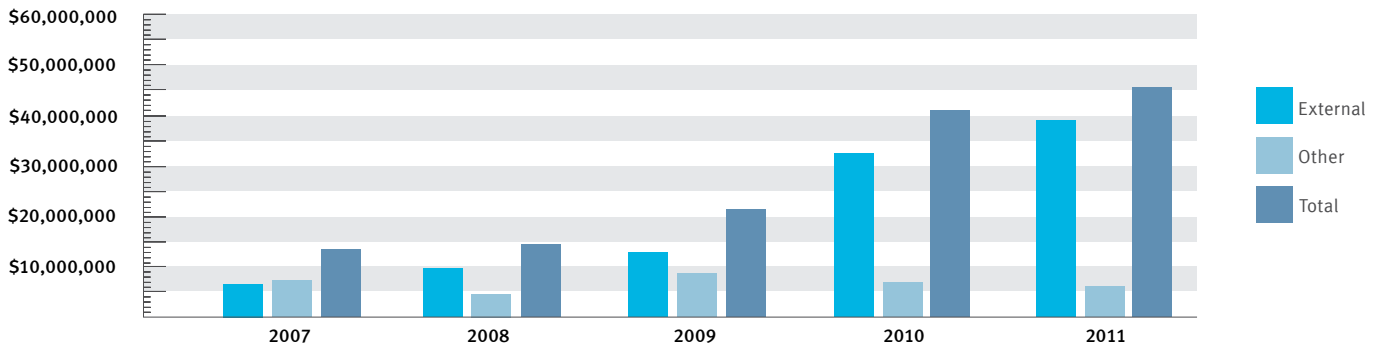
The importance of this and a pivotal role of research and teaching in a major hospital is epitomised in multiple statements, one of the most apposite being that from the National Institutes of Health:

*"Research enhances the vitality of teaching
Teaching lifts the standard of service
Service opens new avenues of investigation."*

Professor Lawrie Powell AC
Director, Research
Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital

Research performance

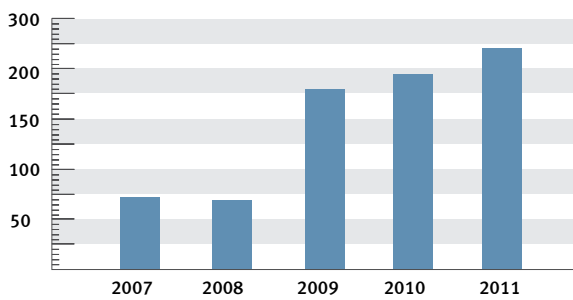
Research grants



Year	External	Other	Total
2007	\$6,386,227	\$7,253,778	\$13,640,005
2008	\$9,906,443	\$4,559,248	\$14,465,691
2009	\$13,181,391	\$8,393,707	\$21,575,098
2010	\$33,560,687	\$7,069,210	\$40,629,897
2011	\$39,237,730	\$6,272,327	\$45,510,057

External research funding includes funds received from peer reviewed funding schemes (e.g. National Health and Medical Research Council, National Heart Foundation), Australian Government grants (e.g. Department of Health and Ageing). Funds received from commercially-sponsored clinical trials contract research are not included. Other research funding includes Queensland Health, RBWH Foundation, RBWH Private Practice Trust Fund and university funding. Grants include those where an RBWH researcher is a Chief or co-Investigator.

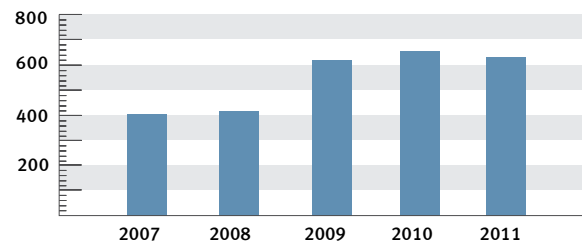
Supervised postgraduate students



Year	No. of students
2007	73
2008	70
2009	180
2010	194
2011	221

Higher degrees include masters and doctoral level degrees conferred or currently under supervision by a RBWH researcher.

Publications



Year	No. of publications
2007	405
2008	413
2009	619
2010	648
2011	632

Publications include peer-reviewed journal articles, where an RBWH researcher is a named co-author. Books, book chapters, electronic publications, abstracts, conference proceedings and 'in press' articles are not included.



Peter Treseder AM
Chief Executive Officer
RBWH Foundation

RBWH Foundation

Lust for Life

On every day, the miracle of another dawn; adventure that startles wonder, imagination and excitement; opportunities for everyone to draw together in the joy of life and understanding.

All of us have the essence and the spirit to achieve our wildest dreams. Dream them first, with truth, into positive visions for the future.

Stand out from the rest to challenge the risk of failure, for in all mistakes there lurk important learnings.

Know also that your ruler is in your thoughts. Free them into the light and soar forward into the decades of all that awaits for you to win.

These simple words were written by a friend and I over a decade ago and to me represent all that is good and true about medical research. The possibility of great discovery; the possibility of a noble triumph!

Most of us ask very little of life. We hope and pray that our loved ones will be able to live their lives with dignity and respect and will be able to follow their life's dreams.

However, we have hospitals filled with people whose dreams have been taken from them. Who instead of being able to live their lives the way they want, find themselves trapped battling illness and asking, "Why me?"

I have often wondered about the fairness of all of this and have come to the conclusion that the true purpose of life is to care for each other, to fight the good fight for others and to support those who are seeking the noble triumph. Part of this is to find the solutions to medical mysteries that will help others live full and productive lives.

At each Research Grant Awards ceremony I marvel at the brain power and the energy of those collecting their awards. The power is overwhelming, the possibilities endless and the family code is supreme, young and old supporting each other. Professors Eadie and Powell, standing proudly beside the young hopefuls watching as they take their first tentative steps towards a hope for the future and a prayer for the past. Will the next medical miracle come from this group? Will they stand on the shoulders of giants to achieve their own gift for humankind?

We at the Foundation are proud to be a member of this family and to have, during the year, contributed a record amount of passion and dollars in support of this noble possibility.

My dream is that together we can achieve this, that together we will make a difference and that together anything is possible!

There is no greater purpose/privilege in life than caring for and inspiring others.

Let's soar forward into the decades of all that awaits for us to win!

Peter Treseder AM
Chief Executive Officer
RBWH Foundation



Recipients of 2011 RBWH Foundation Grant Awards.



Prof. Andrew Wilson
Executive Dean, Faculty of Health, Queensland University of Technology

Queensland University of Technology

In 2011 the partnership between Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH) continued to foster developments in health-related research, training and education.

The strong relationship between QUT and RBWH provides an ideal combination of academic and clinical resources to promote innovative and translational research that enables RBWH patients to benefit from novel research and education developments. Collaborations are bolstered by a number of nursing, allied health and medical joint and adjunct appointments at RBWH reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of the research and education spanning the two organisations.

In addition to strengthening existing relationships, several new collaborations were developed in 2011. These included collaborations between the Department of Vascular Surgery (RBWH), the School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences (QUT) and the Department of Gynaecology and the School of Biomedical Sciences (QUT). This involved several successful outcomes including an awarded Centre for Research Excellence (CRE), National Heart Foundation grants, and joint supervision of higher degree research students. Significant areas of growth include the Tissue Repair and Regeneration Team at QUT with the RBWH Foundation, the Prostate Cancer group and RBWH's Conjoint Endocrinology Laboratory, and several successful grants involving QUT's Trauma and Emergency Services research group.

The Academic Nursing Centre in the Centre for Clinical Nursing collaboration continues with assessing patient and service outcomes in Australian emergency departments, testing interventions for prevention of pressure injury in the intensive care unit, and the clinical and demographic profile of patients with chronic kidney disease in south-east Queensland. QUT has three nursing professorial units at the RBWH (acute surgery nursing, intensive care nursing and renal nursing) which continue to strengthen collaborative nursing research between the two organisations to improve outcomes for patients at the hospital. QUT is also a lead partner in Queensland Health's Centre for Palliative Care Research and Education (CPCRE) at RBWH.

The training and education of researchers and clinicians remains a strong focus. In 2011 there was a marked increase in enrolments of clinical professionals from the RBWH in higher degree research (HDR) programs at QUT. HDR student supervision engages staff and students from RBWH's Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Royal Brisbane Clinical School, Department of Neurology, Internal Medicine Services, Department of Vascular Surgery, Radiation Therapy Cancer Care Services, Children's Nutrition Research Centre, Queensland Children's Medical Research Institute and the Department of Gynaecology. Key outcomes include publications in high quality journals and completions of higher degree research degrees.

The Faculty of Health at QUT continues to endorse a number of nursing, allied health and medical joint and adjunct appointments at the hospital. These formal appointments recognise the importance of bringing together knowledge and expertise across these two areas to bring about advances in the health sector.

Professor Andrew Wilson
Executive Dean, Faculty of Health,
Queensland University of Technology





Professor Bruce Abernethy

Deputy Executive Dean
and Associate Dean
(Research), Faculty of
Health Sciences, The
University of Queensland



UQ: more than 100 years of education.

The University of Queensland

2011 has seen continued strengthening of the long-standing relationship between The University of Queensland (UQ) and the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH).

It is a relationship that the university values strongly and actively seeks to nurture. It has been particularly pleasing over the past year to have seen further recognition of the importance of the nexus between research, teaching and clinical service delivery that the university-hospital partnership provides, and increased understanding of the essential foundation this presents for the potential future formation of a top-flight academic health sciences centre.

In 2011, as in previous years, the active interaction and collaboration between UQ and RBWH has occurred at many levels. There continues to be conjoint and academic title holder appointments of staff, joint research projects, joint commitments to the recruitment and support of academic clinicians, and joint contributions to the development of world class infrastructure, all of which enhance the research culture and capacity of the Herston precinct.

UQ's Schools of Medicine, Nursing and Midwifery and Population Health all have a core presence on the Herston campus and staff and research higher degree (MPhil and PhD) students from across these various schools engage collaboratively in research of direct relevance to the day-to-day activities of RBWH.

The activities of four of the School of Medicine's Research centres - the Burns, Trauma and Critical Care Research Centre (directed by Professor Jeff Lipman), the Queensland Centre for Gynaecological Cancer Research (directed by Professor Andreas Obermair), the Multiple Sclerosis Research Centre (directed by Professor Michael Pender) and the Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences Research Centre (directed by Professor Gerard Byrne) are based at RBWH with direct involvement from key hospital units, departments and clinicians.

Over the course of the year, these centres have continued to undertake research projects and produce research outputs of direct clinical relevance. The University of Queensland Centre for Clinical Research (UQCCR) has grown further throughout 2011 with key researchers in the programme areas of mothers, babies and lifelong health, cancer, brain and mental health, infection, and immunity establishing additional strong links with hospital-based clinicians. The impending formation of the Asia Pacific Centre for Neuromodulation within UQCCR will provide exciting new and fertile grounds for further collaboration.

The UQ Faculty of Health Sciences looks forward to 2012 with genuine excitement in regard to the potential for even further enhancement of the research environment at the Herston campus and further consolidation and extension of the productive research collaborations with RBWH.

Two exciting new joint infrastructure projects that are currently underway – the \$120 million Oral Health Centre in collaboration with Queensland Health and the Herston Imaging and Research Facility (HIRF) in collaboration with RBWH, QIMR and QUT will near completion and provide a stimulus to further enhance the linkage between UQ and RBWH and the capacity and scope for world-leading research on the Herston campus.

Professor Bruce Abernethy

Deputy Executive Dean and Associate Dean (Research)
Faculty of Health Sciences
The University of Queensland



Nicky Foxlee

Manager, Herston Health Sciences Library and UQ Dentistry Library, The University of Queensland

Herston Health Sciences Library The University of Queensland

The Herston Health Sciences Library provides resources and services to support the research, clinical, teaching and learning needs of hospital staff located on the Herston site, as well as staff and students of The University of Queensland (UQ).

Librarians in the Research and Information Service (RIS) at the Herston Health Sciences Library provide expert advice to hospital staff from across the hospital's departments and units. They support staff conducting research through all stages of their research cycle and can assist with:

- individual research consultations
- literature searches
- advanced information literacy training and department in-service sessions
- developing collections for research and teaching needs
- staying up-to-date with the literature in a discipline
- endnote (referencing software)
- setting up journal clubs.

During the past year, RIS Librarians at Herston Health Sciences Library conducted 759 individual research consultations and undertook more than 100 literature searches for hospital clients requiring evidence-based information to support research, patient care, clinical guideline and care pathway development, and audit or policy documentation.

The Librarians regularly contribute their expertise at hospital journal clubs, including Surgical Day Care Unit (SDCU), Mental Health, Hospital Alcohol and Drug Service (HADS), Safety and Quality, and Immunology journal club. Metrics assistance for grant applications and data management advice has also been provided.

Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital staff have access to world class research and scholarship through the print resources provided by the UQ Library. The Library (15 branches) has one of the largest academic collections in Australia with more than two million volumes. The library provides an exceptional print collection of health and medical books and journals. In 2011, the Herston Collection Development Committee, comprising representatives from the hospitals and the university, purchased 1,200 new items; 19,703 items were borrowed from the collection and 119,316 items were re-shelved after being returned to or used in the library.

Increasingly, researchers seek access to scholarly information in electronic format. The library provides an extensive and increasing range of electronic journals, books and other digital material. Clinicians with UQ academic title have full access to UQ Library electronic resources, while other hospital staff members have walk-in access to a wide range of electronic books, journals and databases.

Hospital staff also have access to Queensland Health's Clinician's Knowledge Network (CKN) - a gateway to electronic books, journals, full-text databases and other resources.

Ensuring hospital staff can find and use the library's research collections and tools is a priority for the Herston Health Sciences Library. Librarians in the Research Information Service conduct regular advanced information literacy training to support the research needs of hospital staff. Training includes searching the specialised databases on CKN and on the UQ library system, managing references using Endnote, keeping up-to-date in the literature of a discipline, and advanced training in Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel.

The document delivery service enables the Herston Health Sciences Library to meet the research and information needs of all of its clients. If an item, whether it be print or electronic, is unavailable from the collections of the UQ Library or CKN, it is obtained from another library within Australia or internationally. In 2011, the Herston Health Sciences Library supplied 1,371 document delivery requests for library clients.

During the past year, 988 library clients attended 97 information literacy classes held in the Herston Health Sciences Library eZone or in a hospital department and library staff contributed towards 35 RBWH orientations sessions for 888 new hospital staff.

A customised website for hospital staff, Herston, Mater and PAH staff <http://www.library.uq.edu.au/hsl/hospital/> provides links to resources and services provided by the library. A Health Sciences News blog and a quarterly newsletter are also available to share information. Herston Health Sciences Library staff members are available to assist hospital staff make the most of the resources and services available. In 2011, Herston Health Sciences Library staff answered 13,044 questions from library clients.

RBWH, the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) and UQ Library jointly fund the Herston Health Sciences Library. The UQ Library manages the Herston Health Sciences Library. In 2011, 84,001 people visited the Herston Health Sciences Library.

Nicky Foxlee

Manager

Herston Health Sciences Library

and UQ Dentistry Library

The University of Queensland



RBWH staff and students have access to world class research and scholarship through the print resources provided by the UQ Library.



Prof. Frank Gannon
Director and CEO
Queensland Institute of
Medical Research

Queensland Institute of Medical Research

The Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR) continues to share strong links with the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH). Our co-location lends itself to the development of strong collaborations, with many of our laboratories working closely with clinicians and hospital staff.

In order to achieve the best outcomes for patients, we are committed to further facilitating this essential linkage of scientific research and clinical practice. The completion of QIMR's new 15 floor research facility will allow for the introduction of additional conjoint laboratories that are vital to the scientific contributions of QIMR. We will also be seeking to expand the number of RBWH clinicians completing research projects within our laboratories.

An exciting future development is the Herston Imaging Research Facility (HIRF), a collaborative partnership between RBWH, QIMR, the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and The University of Queensland (UQ). Anticipated to open in late 2012, this world class facility will incorporate multi-modality imaging capabilities and provide excellence in translational research. The HIRF will provide research imaging technology to support clinical research protocols, to develop and refine optimal imaging protocols for clinical care and to carry our research into imaging technology itself.

A longer term aspiration is to expand the established research and clinical collaborations and transform the Herston Campus into an Academic Health Science Centre. Together we can continue to consolidate Herston as a leading hub for medical research and treatment for all Queenslanders.

Professor Frank Gannon
Director and CEO
Queensland Institute of Medical Research



The University of Queensland Centre for Clinical Research

Prof. Murray Mitchell
Director, The University of
Queensland Centre for
Clinical Research

I am delighted to report that in 2011 UQCCR has enjoyed its best year since beginning operations. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all staff and students for their tremendous efforts throughout 2011.

Researchers at UQCCR have experienced outstanding success in receiving funding throughout 2011. In the latest NHMRC round we were awarded 11 of the 33 project grants submitted (where researchers were a lead investigator). This success rate of 33 per cent compares favourably with the national average of 22.5 per cent. Overall we received \$8.44 million in funding which is a significant proportion of the NHMRC funding awarded to UQ.

The flow of high quality publications from the centre increased substantially in 2011, with researchers publishing in major journals including Nature, Nature Genetics, Lancet and PLoS ONE. Publications totalled 312 this year, compared with 219 in 2010.

UQCCR is committed to continuously providing the highest quality student experience. We now have 103 higher degree research (HDR) students enrolled, with a strong list of new HDR students. In addition, we have been successful in attracting a very strong and experienced executive management team, including Eluca Kim and Harvey Kramer.

Educating and engaging with the community continued to be a high priority throughout 2011. This year we appointed Professor Wayne Hall as Deputy Director (Policy). Professor Hall will be focusing on increasing public visibility of UQCCR research in order to shape government policy.

We also appointed Dr James Scott, a bright, young researcher who is focussed on critical mental health problems in children and adolescents. His current research looks at early adverse events, such as bullying, and how these events affect children later in life. Dr Scott will no doubt be a strong leader in the community and aims to make recommendations to schools and government regarding effective bullying interventions. We hope to further increase our interactions with community groups and schools in the coming years.

As part of our commitment to providing researchers and students with world class platform technologies to give them a competitive edge in their studies and grant applications, we have initiated the Centre for Clinical Diagnostics on level seven. This will be a NATA-accredited environment essentially reducing time from discovery to direct patient benefit by 18 months or more.

In collaboration with Matt Brown (UQDI) and John Mattick (IMB) we have developed The Centre for Clinical Genomics which is located at the Diamantina Institute. With the intention of maximising expertise and infrastructure, UQCCR has provided two new next generation sequencers (HiSeq 2000 and MiSeq) and support for expert supervision.

We continue to make progress in building the Herston Imaging Research Facility (HIRF). This is a joint initiative of The University of Queensland, Queensland Health, Queensland University of Technology and the Queensland Institute of Medical Research. It will be an annex to UQCCR and will utilise our clinical facilities.

In addition, funding has been secured for the building and new MRI and PET-MR equipment.

We have devoted considerable effort to further developing partnerships with clinical colleagues and hospitals in Brisbane. In 2011, UQCCR hosted the Healthy Eating Learning Program (HELP) clinic – a study led by the Queensland Children's Medical Research Institute which aims to assist children with feeding difficulties.

In partnership with St Andrews Hospital and the Faculty of Health Science (UQ) we are establishing the Asia-Pacific Centre for Neuromodulation in 2012. This Centre will be located at UQCCR, with surgical facilities at St Andrews hospital. It will be built around the pioneering work of Professor Peter Silburn.

The growing reputations of both UQCCR and UQ, combined with the quality of facilities in Brisbane, have enabled UQCCR to succeed in a bid to host the Society for Gynecologic Investigation (SGI) International Summit in 2012. The SGI is the world's leading obstetrics and gynecology society. 2012 is already shaping up to be another wonderful year.

Professor Murray Mitchell
Director, The University of Queensland
Centre for Clinical Research



Dr Conor Brophy
Chair, Human Research
Ethics Committee, Royal
Brisbane and Women's
Hospital

Human Research Ethics Committee

The national harmonisation process by which multicentre research studies are reviewed by a single Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) has progressed during 2011, from the development to the implementation and consolidation phase. There are more than 200 NHMRC registered HRECs in Australia. Of these, 40 are certified to conduct single ethical review in accordance with the national scheme. RBWH HREC was amongst the first to receive certification in January 2011 for a period of three years. There are jurisdictional challenges to mutual acceptance of HREC reviews across state boundaries. Uniformity across the country is being achieved gradually with states agreeing at health department level to accept clinical trial ethical reviews from another state. Thus, Victoria and Queensland health departments signed a memorandum of understanding to accept ethical reviews from certified committees of public sector hospitals in each state from October 2011. The New South Wales Government committed to become a signatory from early 2012.

NHMRC has concurrently provided national guidance on the operation of the certification scheme and institutional responsibilities related to monitoring and research governance. Both activities are, to a large extent, separate from the province of the HREC and are conducted separately from the HREC's chief responsibility of global ethical and scientific review. Two national guidance papers* have been issued in recent months by NHMRC to assist institutions in moving from the historical position of delegating study-related monitoring responsibilities to a HREC to the current standard whereby each research organisation reviews and monitors its own site's research activities.

RBWH HREC is certified to conduct single ethical review in adult research in the categories of clinical interventional research other than clinical trials, clinical trials (Phases I, II, III, IV) health services research, mental health, molecular biology, population health and/or public health, and qualitative health research. The review undertaken by HRECs in Australia includes scientific as well as ethical assessments, and RBWH HREC is fortunate in having a Scientific sub-Committee which provides a methodological opinion on studies prior to the main HREC review. Those research studies which have received grant funding under an independent peer review system do not always require this additional scientific assessment. This has been the case with several grant-funded research studies underway at RBWH.

Membership of the full HREC has remained steady over the last year at 26, and continues to fulfil the requirements for a NHMRC registered HREC in functioning in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). Thus, the Committee meets monthly and includes six lay members, seven scientist/researchers and seven clinicians/practitioners with experience in the areas of research reviewed. A further nine clinicians/researchers constitute the Scientific sub-Committee. The various members devote many hours in a voluntary capacity to review of research and to training in the ethics of research.

As expected following the introduction of the new single ethical review system, the number of new research submissions received by the HREC declined in 2011 by nearly a fifth from the number seen in 2010. In 2011, 162 projects were submitted to the HREC. The median time from submission closing date to final ethical decision on research projects requiring full HREC review was 27 days, an improvement from 2010 of three days. The proposed key performance indicator under the new single ethical review process is 60 days.

Monitoring of research also entails review of study amendments, safety, annual and final reports. The numbers of amendments reviewed during 2011 remained high at 319. There were more than 1,500 other reports submitted for monitoring to the Committee on a total of more than 1,000 active studies. Because of the unique role of the single reviewing HREC under the national system, much time is spent in the provision of general ethical advice to researchers by the Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator of the Committee prior to submission, and on communicating specific recommendations from the Committee after formal review of research. As a consequence opportunities for discussion with researchers are encouraged by the HREC and the institution and embraced by researchers themselves as vital to the maintenance of national research standards.

Dr Conor Brophy
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee
Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital

**NHMRC Framework for Monitoring: Guidance for the national approach to single ethical review of multicentre research and NHMRC Research Governance Handbook: Guidance for the national approach to single ethical review.*

<http://hrep.nhmrc.gov.au/toolbox/guidance-multicentre-research>