



**February 2011
Newsletter**

PEARLS

Making a difference for mothers and their babies

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Research

Fellowships/Studentships

Hasitha Balasuriya
Alicia Dennis

News and Events

Stop Press

Congratulations to Angela Makris who has recently been awarded a \$200,000 grant to consider the causes of high blood pressure immediately after delivery. This study will involve women at Liverpool Hospital, Campbelltown Hospital, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and the Mater Misericordiae Hospital at Crows Nest.

Latest Projects:

Some of our latest projects detailed:

Blood vessel changes as early signals of high blood pressure in pregnancy

This study uses a state-of the art camera to examine the back of the eyes to determine if blood vessel changes in the eye can predict preeclampsia.

The study is being carried out by PhD student Samantha Lupton in association with the University of Western Sydney.

This study involves over 100 women with preeclampsia or at risk of developing preeclampsia.

Samantha has recruited almost all of the women needed for her study and she will begin her analysis shortly. She has been recently trained in Melbourne to use the equipment and analyse the results.

Toxic effects on the placenta

The toxic effect of poor blood supply on the placenta was the subject of Neroli Sunderland's PhD dissertation and is the ongoing work of Gabrielle Bobek at the University of Western Sydney.

Gabrielle has demonstrated that a toxic reaction in the placenta leads to the typical changes that are seen in preeclampsia. This work will give us a better chance to target the abnormalities as we work with sick women with preeclampsia.

Long term heart disease after preeclampsia

Jane Tooher's PhD project focuses on the links between long term heart disease and preeclampsia. This study, which is being carried out in collaboration with the University of Western Sydney and RPAH will involve many thousands of women in Sydney.

Jane's preliminary data shows that women with high blood pressure in pregnancy are twice as likely to have hypertension in their 40s and 50s and she is investigating whether this can be prevented by careful blood pressure control during the pregnancy.

Protective effect of cholesterol on the placenta

Francesca Charlton, working in association with Prof Kerry-Anne Rye at the Heart Research Institute, has shown that cholesterol may have a protective effect by targeting the toxic abnormalities that occur with preeclampsia.

Sleep disordered breathing in pregnancy as a cause of preeclampsia

Annette Robertson has commenced a sleep study at Campbelltown Hospital which will eventually recruit many thousands of women in Sydney to determine whether there is a link between sleep disorders such as sleep apnoea and preeclampsia.

Early diagnosis of preeclampsia using novel tests of placental function

This is one of our most critical projects as we are endeavouring to develop an early screening test to identify those women who are likely to develop preeclampsia.

This project is being led by Prof. Hennessy.

For further information please contact Prof. Hennessy:
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Further donations can be made through our website
(You will be directed to the Heart Research Institute).