



ASMR

AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY
FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

WA

2026 ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING Program Booklet

7 August 2026
8.15am - 5pm

The Hub, Bentley Technology Park

Human Insight. Smart Tools. Modern Research.

AI



<https://asmr.org.au/wa/>



Australian Society for
Medical Research

Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Society for Medical Research acknowledges that for more than 60,000 years the Whadjuk people of the Nyoongar nation have been and continue to be the traditional owners of the land on which we meet.

We recognise their ongoing connection to the land and contributions to research, university and wide Australian society. We pay our respects to Indigenous Elders, past, present and emerging and will continue to acknowledge their living culture and their continuing roles in the life of this Country.

The ASMR's vision is for a healthy and equitable Australia. There is no doubt that a significant gap remains between the health outcomes of First Nations people and other Australians, and the ASMR will continue to work towards closing this gap.

The ASMR believes that our diversity is our strength: health and medical research belongs to everyone, and everyone belongs in health and medical research.



2026 WA ASMR Committee



Dr Ricky Lareu
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Deputy Convenor



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Human Insight. Smart Tools. Modern Research.

Featuring insights from our plenary speaker and panellists on artificial intelligence in health and medical research

Discover how artificial intelligence is reshaping medical research in this interactive panel discussion, where experts will share insights, experiences, and practical considerations for researchers navigating the rapidly evolving AI landscape.

Plenary Speaker

A/Prof. Sonny Pham

Sonny Pham is an Associate Professor in Artificial Intelligence at Curtin University. His applied AI research spans cardiology, radiology, speech pathology, rare diseases, and remote Indigenous health. He leads cross-disciplinary collaborations with Perkins Institute, Fiona Stanley Hospital, and Perth Children's Hospital.

His teams have developed an explainable ECG diagnosis platform heading to clinical validation, Aura-CXR for AI-assisted chest X-ray examination (Curtin Innovation Award 2025), an AI speech disorder diagnostic entering commercialisation, and the Healthy Connections project delivering digital health technology to remote First Nations communities in the Pilbara.

His work in health has received two INCITE Social Impact Awards and two Curtin Innovation Awards.



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Expert Panel Members

A/Prof Matt Cooper, Manager of Biostatistics, The Kids Research Institute

Matt is a biostatistician with 15 years' experience collaborating on Western Australia-led health research projects. Based at The Kids Research Institute Australia, he applies diverse study designs and analytical techniques, focusing on clinical epidemiology and randomised controlled trials across health domains including diabetes, emergency medicine, neurodevelopmental conditions, neonatal nutrition, and respiratory health. An investigator on Category 1 grant-funded projects, he also leads a team of biostatisticians providing institutional and consultative research support. An advocate for R and reproducible research frameworks, A/Prof Cooper is curious but cautious about the role AI can play in supporting high-quality research.



Dr Marion Mundt, Research Fellow, Nutrition and Health Innovation Research Institute, Edith Cowan University

Marion is a Research Fellow at the Nutrition and Health Innovation Research Institute at Edith Cowan University and the computer science lead within the Fall Free Future program, which investigates musculoskeletal health and falls in ageing. She completed her PhD in Biomechanics at the German Sport University Cologne and RWTH Aachen University in 2020 and has since held a research position at The University of Western Australia funded through the Australian Institute of Sport. Her work integrates large-scale multimodal datasets to develop models that predict performance or health outcomes. She currently leads research using AI to extract markers of physical function from DXA scans to enable earlier identification of individuals at risk of mobility decline and falls. In 2025, she was awarded a Raine Priming Grant to develop machine learning approaches for predicting trajectories of physical function during ageing.



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Expert Panel Members

**Alex Jenkins, Director,
Western Australian Data Science Innovation Hub,
Curtin University**

Alex is the Director of the Western Australian Data Science Innovation Hub (WADSIH) at Curtin University, where he leads the state's premier organisation for AI and data science capability building. He serves as a member of the Western Australian Government's AI Advisory Board, advising the Department of the Premier and Cabinet on AI policy and adoption, and chairs the Curtin AI in Research Group (CAIR), guiding the university's research community on accelerating their impact with AI. His work focuses on the translational impact of AI across industry, education, and public policy — bridging the gap between research and real-world adoption. He is particularly focused on how AI can deliver measurable outcomes in education and health, and in shaping the policy settings needed to support responsible, sovereign AI capability in Australia.



**Beth Cusack, AI Program Coordinator,
Western Australian Data Science Innovation Hub,
Curtin University**

Beth is a Generative AI educator passionate about inclusive technology and neurodiversity in education. She graduated with Honours in Mechatronic Engineering from Curtin University, and has a background in disability support work, working with students of all ages and abilities. Beth designs and delivers Generative AI training, both in schools and through extracurricular programs, empowering all students to understand, explore, and create with AI. Her work focuses on teaching responsible and ethical use of generative AI, combining technical understanding with creativity and accessibility.



Message from the WA ASMR Convenor

The Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) is Australia's peak professional body for health and medical researchers. Founded in 1961, ASMR has spent 65 years creating opportunities for students and research professionals nationwide, advocating on behalf of health and medical researchers, and promoting the vital role that medical research plays in improving health outcomes for all Australians.

A highlight of ASMR's annual calendar is ASMR Medical Research Week®. This national initiative showcases the impact of Australian health and medical research while fostering engagement with policymakers, industry partners, and the wider community. ASMR Medical Research Week® 2026 will be held from 23-30 October across the country and will feature Professor Fabienne Mackay as the 2026 ASMR Medallist. Professor Mackay is internationally recognised for her pioneering discoveries in immunology, including research that laid the foundation for the first new treatment for systemic lupus in more than 50 years. Professor Mackay will be the guest of honour at the Western Australian Gala Dinner on Friday, 23 October 2026.

Here in Western Australia, the ASMR Annual Scientific Meeting is one of our most important events. It brings together researchers, clinicians, students, and industry partners from diverse disciplines to share discoveries, establish collaborations, and celebrate research excellence. The meeting provides a valuable platform for emerging researchers to present their work, gain feedback from peers and experts, and compete for prestigious presentation awards in a supportive and collegial environment.

ASMR is also committed to nurturing the next generation of researchers through initiatives such as the ASMR Research Awards, which support early-career researchers undertaking collaborative research visits within Australia and internationally. These opportunities are made possible through the generosity of ASMR members and supporters who contribute to the ASMR Research Fund.

On behalf of the WA ASMR Organising Committee, I would like to thank you for joining us at the 2026 WA ASMR Annual Scientific Meeting. I also extend my sincere appreciation to our sponsors, exhibitors, judges, volunteers, and prize donors whose support makes this event possible.

As we celebrate ASMR's 65th year, I hope you enjoy today's meeting, make new connections, and leave inspired by the outstanding research being undertaken across Western Australia and beyond.

Dr Ricky Lareu

Western Australian State Convener 2026
Australian Society for Medical Research



ASMR Research Funds & Awards

Supporting and empowering early and emerging career researchers is essential to the future strength of Australia's health and medical research sector. Through the ASMR Research Fund Awards, ASMR provides opportunities for researchers to undertake short-term research visits with laboratories and research groups outside their home city, helping them gain new skills, establish collaborations, and expand their professional networks.

Each year, the ASMR Research Fund offers two competitive travel awards:

- **Domestic Research Award** to support a research visit within Australia.
- **International Research Award** to support an overseas research placement.

These awards are open to ASMR members who are in the final year of their PhD or within five years of PhD conferral and enable recipients to undertake research visits lasting one to six weeks. The program is designed to foster collaboration, accelerate skill development, and strengthen Australia's research capacity.

Continued support of the Research Fund is vital to ensuring these opportunities remain available for future generations of researchers. If you would like to contribute, tax-deductible donations can be made when renewing your membership or via:

<https://asmr.org.au/research-awards/donate/>

2025-2026 ASMR Research Fund Award Recipients

We are delighted to recognise the recipients of the 2025-2026 Awards:

Domestic Research Award: Dr Kanika Mehta, Postdoctoral Researcher, Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute (Melbourne). Dr Mehta's research focuses on the intersection of diabetes and dementia. Her award supported a collaborative research visit to the University of New South Wales, where she worked with leading dementia researchers to further investigate dementia risk prediction in people living with type 2 diabetes.

International Research Award: Dr Sonia McAlister, Postdoctoral Researcher, Vaccine Trials Group, The Kids Research Institute Australia (Perth). Dr McAlister's research focuses on optimising vaccination strategies across the life course to ensure timely and effective protection against vaccine-preventable diseases, with a focus on pertussis. This award will support Dr McAlister's travel to the European Plotkin Institute for Vaccinology in Belgium, where she will receive training in Systems Serology.

Applications for the 2026-2027 ASMR Research Fund Awards close on 31 July 2026. **Plan ahead and keep an eye out on announcements for the 2027-2028 ASMR Research Fund Awards!** Applicants must be current ASMR members and meet the eligibility requirements outlined on the ASMR website.

For further information, application details, or to support the ASMR Research Fund, please visit www.asmr.org.au.

About the Australian Society for Medical Research

ASMR is committed to building a strong, sustainable, and internationally competitive health and medical research workforce that improves health outcomes for all Australians.

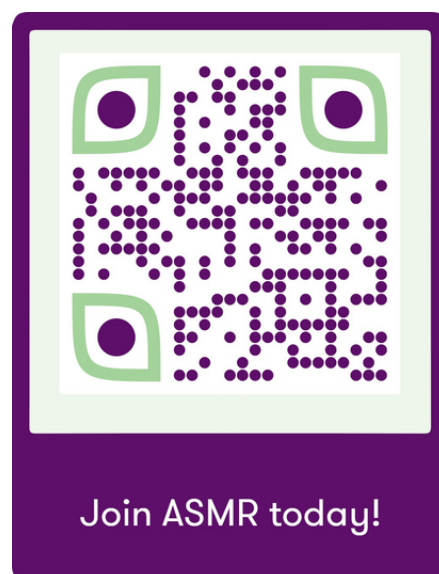
ASMR's activities include:

- Advocating for health and medical research at local, state, and national levels.
- Fostering excellence and innovation in health and medical research.
- Promoting collaboration between basic, translational, clinical, and population health researchers.
- Increasing public awareness of the benefits and impact of medical research through initiatives such as Medical Research Week®.
- Hosting annual scientific meetings, including state Scientific Meetings and the ASMR National Scientific Conference.
- Supporting emerging researchers through ASMR Research Fund Awards and professional development opportunities.
- Keeping members informed through regular communications, advocacy updates, and the ASMR eBulletin.
- Delivering career and professional development programs that help researchers thrive at every stage of their careers.

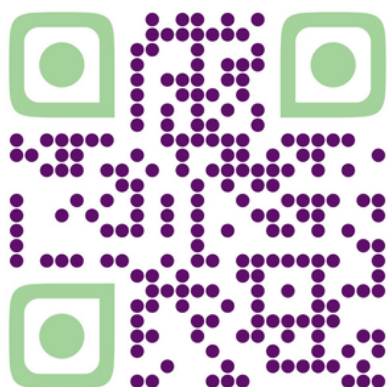
Become an ASMR Member today !

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regarding ASMR membership!

<https://asmr.org.au/membership/how-to-join/>



2026 WA ASMR GALA DINNER



Purchase tickets here!

Date: 23rd Oct 2026, Friday
Venue: The University Club of Western Australia

Celebrate the achievements of WA's health and medical researchers at the 2026 ASMR Medical Research Week® Gala Dinner! This a formal dinner unites esteemed researchers, students, industry professionals, politicians and our 2026 ASMR Medallist, Prof Fabienne Mackay (UWA). Prize recipients at the WA annual scientific meeting will also be recognised at the Gala Dinner.



2026 ASMR Program

8:45am **Welcome Speech**

@ **Global Streaming Centre**

9:00am **Session 1 Plenary | Sonny Pham**

9:30am **Session 2 | Lightning Talks**

Supported by:
Curtin University

Charlotte Chia

Inhibiting reactive oxygen species as a novel therapeutic approach for high-risk acute lymphoblastic leukaemia

Jared Mouldsdale

The multifaceted role of copper (Cu) in the tumour microenvironment and the therapeutic effect of copper chelators

Kate Busby

Evaluating the impact of surgery on the glioblastoma microenvironment

My Ngo

Multi-feature cell-free DNA profiling to predict immune checkpoint inhibitor response

Tharani Senavirathna

Ellagic acid restores gut microbial function and bile acid homeostasis in experimental MASH and protects against inulin-induced dysbiosis

Elizabeth Churchill

An integrative review proposing a shared neural inhibitory mechanism between chronic pain and adult ADHD

Yasmin Henderson-Kelly

Poster 1

Characterisation of the bone marrow fibroblasts and extracellular matrix during B-Cell acute lymphoblastic leukaemia development

Caitlyn Vicars

Poster 6

Targeting excitotoxicity in ALS: ASO correction of EAAT2 splicing

Tristan Smith

Poster 7

Epigenetic reprogramming of gene expression using CRISPR-based editors for liver cancer therapy

Erik Ryan

Poster 15

Exploring the role of MIR205HG in PI3K resistance breast cancer

Isabella Brown

Poster 5

A standardised transcriptomics analysis workflow for unexplained recurrent pregnancy loss reveals pro-inflammatory signatures

10:15 – 10:45 am **Morning Tea**

2026 ASMR Program

10:45am **Session 3**

Session 3A

Cancer Biology, Therapeutics & Precision Medicine

Supported by:
Forrest Research Foundation

@Global Streaming Centre

Miriam Fuentes-Guirado

Profiling ctDNA genetic features as prognostic markers in uveal melanoma

Aydin Raei Sadigh

Interrogating the biomarker potential of methylated cell-free DNA in melanoma patients

Wang Li

Choice of polymer and cross-linking chemistry alters LNP-mRNA release kinetics, with implications for intra-operative application of mRNA therapeutics

Ann Wang

Abnormal platelet function in myeloproliferative neoplasms

Callum Flanagan

BAP1 is tumour suppressor gene that drives invasion in mesothelioma

Tanveer Seeam

In vitro evaluation of fimepinostat sensitivity in uveal melanoma cell lines

Saskia Saville

Developing a programmable Cas13d RNA therapeutic platform for hepatocellular carcinoma

Session 3B

Clinical Research, Population Health & Healthcare Outcomes

Supported by:
The University of Western Australia

@ Seminar Room 1

Reece Granger

Head injury assessments and mechanisms of head impact in the Australian National Rugby League: A retrospective observational study

Bethany Fisher

Accelerated recovery after advanced anterior-to-posterior (ATP) spinal fusion surgery

Caroline Wilson

Accelerated recovery for endoscopic "key-hole" lumbar spine discectomy

Haftom Abraha

Association between glycated haemoglobin A1c and automated abdominal aortic calcification: the UK Biobank Imaging Study

Sneha Rajagopalan

Perspectives of Australian allied health professionals regarding the management of functional neurological disorder (FND)

Evelyn Tay

Quantifying short-term adverse events following influenza vaccination for children under 5 years

Judith Paredes Sanchez

The development and validation of the Fremantle Back Awareness Questionnaire 2 (FreBAQ-2)

12:00 - 1:30pm **Lunch & Poster Sessions**

2026 ASMR Program

1:30pm **Session 4**

Session 4A
Immunology, Infection & Inflammatory Disease

Supported by:
Institute for Respiratory Health

@Global Streaming Centre

Mia Zekovic-Bosnjak

Investigating the acute immune response to burn injury: The role of neutrophils and mucosal-associated invariant T cells

Kriya Velayutham

Investigating the role of PCSK9 in tumour and T cell interactions to improve immune checkpoint blockade in mesothelioma

Mackenzie Lighton

The effects of low-dose radiotherapy on tumour-associated macrophage polarisation in a mesothelioma mouse model

Juliet Schreurs

Leveraging mRNA-based immunotherapies to modulate the tumour microenvironment after cancer surgery

Lucy Hartnell

Age shapes coordinated transcriptomic and proteomic antiviral responses during early SARS-CoV-2 infection

Faith Hartley

Low-dose radiotherapy transiently alters tumour-associated macrophages towards a pro-inflammatory phenotype in mesothelioma models

Abigail Lim

Novel therapy to promote recovery for leukaemia patients undergoing haematopoietic stem cell transplant

Session 4B
Metabolism, Nutrition, Microbiome & Neurological Health

Supported by:
Perron Institute

@ Seminar Room 1

Marhami Fahriani

Accurate identification of Enterococcus lactis causing bacteraemia by MALDI-TOF mass spectrometry and multiplex qPCR

Kanishka Senthilvel

Molecular therapy to restore Leptin sensitivity in obese mice using phosphorodiamidate morpholino oligonucleotides

Amaha Adhanu

Source-specific nitrate and nitrite intake and the incidence of chronic kidney disease in the Danish Diet, Cancer, and Health Cohort

Melissa Eccles

Myelin, cholesterol, and neurodegeneration: A new player emerges

Kavisha Katuwawala

Role of faecal microRNA profiles in preclinical Alzheimer's disease

Lahiru Perera

Gut microbiome derived metabolites & byproducts in Alzheimer's disease: Regulation of immunity

Jaya Singh

Mass spectrometry-based plasma lipidomics identifies PUFA-related signatures associated with future stroke risk in older men

Matthew Snelson

Inflamed gut, elevated pressure: Linking intestinal inflammation to hypertension

3:00 - 3:40pm **Afternoon Networking Session with Drinks**

2026 ASMR Program

3:40pm **Expert Panel**

@Global Streaming Centre

Matt Cooper

*Biostatistician and Manager of Biostatistics
The Kids Research Institute*

Marion Mundt

*Research Fellow
Nutrition and Health Innovation Research Institute
Edith Cowan University*

Alex Jenkins

*Director
WA Data Science Innovation Hub*

Beth Cusack

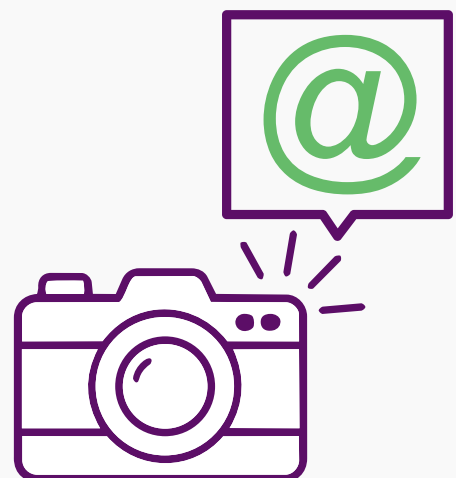
*AI Program Coordinator
WA Data Science Innovation Hub*

4:25pm **Closing & Prize Announcements**

4:55pm **Event Close**

Whether you are presenting, learning
about AI in medical research, or
connecting with fellow researchers,
capture the moment!

**Share the photo on LinkedIn and tag
Australian Society for Medical Research!**



List of Posters

Poster 1

Yasmin Henderson-Kelly

Characterisation of the bone marrow fibroblasts and extracellular matrix during B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukaemia development

Poster 2

Claire Emery

Seeing beyond symptoms: Investigating visual and oculomotor dysfunction after mild traumatic brain injury

Poster 3

Wasil Farhan

Investigating molecular interactions between cannabidiol (CBD) and CX3CR1 using computational biophysics

Poster 4

Nooruz Zahra Izad Negahdar

Characterising neuronal and immune cell infiltration in endometriosis: A 3D approach to understanding pain pathways

Poster 5

Isabella Brown

A standardised transcriptomics analysis workflow for unexplained recurrent pregnancy loss reveals pro-inflammatory signatures

Poster 6

Caitlyn Vicars

Targeting excitotoxicity in ALS: ASO correction of EAAT2 splicing

Poster 7

Tristan Smith

Epigenetic reprogramming of gene expression using CRISPR-based editors for liver cancer therapy

Poster 8

Claire Jelaca

Investigating the effect of CD40 stimulation on T-cell engager activity in paediatric B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukaemia

Poster 9

Jack Trotter

Glymphatic system dysfunction in mild traumatic brain injury and its relationship to persisting post-concussion symptoms

Poster 10

Amber Harding

Investigating the role of dysferlin in cancer

Poster 11

Matteo Scannella

Quantifying functional changes in the transferrin-transferrin receptor pathway in liver cancer

Poster 12

Alyssa Dow

Defining the effects of SEC61G on cancer ER dynamics and context-dependent Sec61 inhibition

Poster 13

Ayesha Templeman

Investigating microglial lipid metabolism in response to amyloid-beta: Implications for Alzheimer's disease

Poster 14

Rowan Galopin

Developing a quality control protocol for the iKnife in burn injury applications

Poster 15

Erik Ryan

Exploring the role of MIR205HG in PI3K resistance breast cancer

Poster 16

Sarenn Mateljan

Investigations of the antimalarial efficacy, pharmacokinetics, and toxicology of a KSME, a natural traditional medicine, in a murine malaria model

Poster 17

Cenxi Gao

Optimizing dsRNA-based immunoadjuvants

Poster 18

Kendrea Fernando

Rheumatic heart disease in remote Australia: Linking preventable cardiac pathology with health inequity