

**Touring scientists bring medical research to life and inspire students in
KYNETON & CASTLEMAINE – Friday, May 17**
Tissue Engineering, Reproductive Health, Cell Metabolism and Malaria

Bringing sight to the blind:

Karl Brown alongside three fellow scientists will be touring with the Australian Society for Medical Research' 2013 Regional School Visits, to encourage high school students to consider a career in biomedical science.

As a PhD Student at the Centre for Eye Research Australia, Brown is part of a diverse team that is developing ways to use a patient's own cells to grow new corneas and restore their sight. Speaking on the importance of his work, Brown says *"Approximately 4.9 million people in the world suffering from corneal blindness in both eyes and many more are blind in one eye due to corneal damage. Currently these patients are treated by cornea transplant but this is not a perfect solution as donor cornea supply is limited and rejection can occur. If we could build corneal tissue in the laboratory, from the patient's own cells, the issues of rejection and supply could be overcome."*

Karl decided to become a scientist because *"I wanted to do interesting work. I had always been interested in biology and have a creative bent so medical research is a 'good fit' for me."* And his career highlight so far? - *"every time a patient receives tissue I have grown in the lab"*. He was also recently awarded "Best Free Paper: Cornea and External Eyes Disease" at the Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology Congress in Hyderabad, India.

From the womb to the grave, how early events shape your future health:

Dr Mai Sarraj says *"Disturbances during embryonic development underlie childhood and adult diseases, such as infertility and cancer."* Working at Prince Henry's Institute of Medical Research, she is investigating events that occur in a mother's womb during pregnancy and how they influence the fertility of male children later in life.

Sarraj was always torn between Art and Science at high school, but decided to become a scientist because *"I loved it and because I could do my art work anytime but I needed specific training for pursuing science"*. After completing a Bachelor of Science in Kuwait, her family had to leave the country due to the Gulf war and migrating to Australia *"opened enormous doors in front of me, I was able to do a Master degree in Virology and a PhD in Paediatrics from Melbourne Uni, this kick started my career and gave me all the necessary tools to become a reproductive biologist"*.

She has found her career to be *"extremely exciting and rewarding. Over the years my science led me to interesting discoveries, traveling around the world, meeting wonderful people and provided me with skills for life."*

Cellular Metabolism - When things go wrong:

Rachel Blake grew up in Bendigo, where she attended Catholic College Bendigo. She says she has always been fascinated in science *"It was a natural progression to study science in secondary school in Bendigo and then do a Bachelor of Science in Melbourne. Although my original plan was to study Veterinary Science, I ended up completing my honours year and getting hooked on working in the lab."*

She is currently working towards a PhD at the Centre for Eye Research Australia investigating *"the way cells produce energy and what happens when that goes wrong, especially in diseases that affect the brain and eye"*. These diseases include Diabetes, Parkinson's Disease and Glaucoma. Blake says that *"After ten years I still get a kick out of putting on my lab coat and simply doing an experiment in the lab"*.

Some of her major career highlights have included *“being awarded two separate prestigious PhD scholarships and more recently being invited to present at a local conference. And I will always value the close relationships I’ve developed along the way”*.

A stressful beginning, Malaria during pregnancy:

Dr Louise Randall completed a PhD at the University of Queensland and is now based at the University of Melbourne where she is studying the impact of Malaria on pregnant women and their babies. She is working towards understanding how the mother’s immune system protects against further infection and how Malaria in the placenta impacts both the mother and baby.

INTERVIEW AND PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES – Contact Anna Bellamy-McIntyre 0431 968 062 or Mai Sarraj 0413 339 054

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