

Vitality

WORLD LEADING CARE AT YOUR DOORSTEP

SPRING 2010

The Brain Disorders Unit

- making a difference



Matthew when he was nine years-old (above), and a picture of him as he is today (left).

A recently admitted patient to our Brain Disorders' Unit, Matthew is a 26 year-old man who suffered a severe head injury as a child.

Matthew was a regular nine year-old boy playing with his mates when he fell, climbing a tree four meters high. He hit his head in the fall and stopped breathing. Rushed to hospital, Matthew lay in a deep coma for three months with severe head injuries.

Matthew's mother Michele, who is also a general practitioner, spoke to *Vitality* about their family's experience. "I don't think anything can prepare you for what you go through as a parent when something like this happens."

Michele explained that since the accident, the things that make Matthew who he is are still there. "I feel very fortunate for that, but Matthew's frontal lobe was damaged in the fall. This causes impulsive behaviour that can put him in danger. He never thinks of consequences."

Matthew had been living at home with his family until last year when he moved into community-based accommodation.

Matthew had some difficulty settling in to his home. He kept leaving the house, without permission, to go to the shops. "This was a serious issue because he would walk out onto a busy road with six lanes of traffic and try to stop trucks by waving his hand at them," she said.

His mother explained that he would often run away from the house and ask people for money to buy large amounts of soft drink. "His behaviour put him in danger," she explained. "After his fall years ago, he has suffered from post-traumatic epilepsy. When he has too much soft drink his sodium levels drop dangerously low and can cause seizures. These are always very severe, requiring Matthew to be put on life-support."

"We were in a bad situation," she said. "Matthew had become a danger to his own life."

"I had not heard about the Brain Disorders Unit until we needed their help. They have probably saved Matthew's life.

He is calmer and much better than he was before, all thanks to their care. They have made our lives a lot more bearable and have really helped us in what was a severely stressful situation," she said.

Michele explained, "They are re-training him so he can transition into community based living again where he can have a more independent life and be with people his own age."

A message from the CEO

Dear supporter,

Austin Health today is a much bigger and busier health service than it was five years ago, when the Austin Hospital Tower opened. I am proud to watch our significance as a health care provider continue to grow.



I would like to extend my thanks and deep appreciation for your support and valued partnership. In particular, I would like to thank those who continue to help our patients by donating to the fundraising appeals we send you. Your support in this way is very much appreciated by so many of the staff and the patients who directly benefit from your support.

Thank you to everyone who donated to our Emergency Department appeal earlier this year. Through your support we have been able to purchase additional equipment for one of our busiest areas of the hospital.

The current fundraising appeal is for our Brain Disorders Unit. You can read about one of the patients Matthew, who at just nine years of age fell from a tree and hit his head, causing damage to his frontal lobe. Life will never be the same for Matthew, who is just one of our many patients receiving help through this remarkable Unit.

You can read about Matthew's story and more in this edition of Vitality.

On behalf of our dedicated health care team and the many patients we treat each year, thank you for your generous and continuing support.

Dr Brendan Murphy
Chief Executive Officer

Update on our new cancer centre

Construction of the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre is underway at the Austin Hospital site.

The past few months have brought much excitement to the progress of the Centre. In particular, a \$69 million funding boost from the Victorian Government in May this year.

The additional funding is great news. It will enable the Centre to be built in a single rather than a staged construction, which will save on building costs. Importantly the new funding provides for an additional research level. The increased research activity will mean more opportunities for patients to participate and benefit from cancer clinical trials.

Premier Brumby said, "The Centre will be an important weapon in our continuing fight against cancer.

About 500 Victorians are diagnosed with cancer each week...this purpose-built, dedicated cancer centre will provide the latest treatment and care to

patients from across Victoria, and will also be home to many important clinical trials, as our researchers turn important discoveries into better outcomes for patients."



The Hon. John Brumby pictured with Olivia and Danielle Green, Member for Yan Yean at the site of the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre at Austin Hospital.

Health Minister Daniel Andrews said "The Centre will be home to four oncology bunkers and three linear accelerator machines, providing the best cancer treatment to patients." Nearly 2,000 additional Victorians will receive their oncology and radiotherapy care once this development is completed.

Opening of the Centre's day treatment areas – Day Oncology, Radiation Oncology, Information and Resources and the Wellness Centre - is scheduled for patients in 2012.

To make a donation to the Centre, or to find out more, visit www.OliviaAppeal.com

Awarded We are proud of the health service we provide and the dedication and commitment of our staff. Recently three staff members were recognised by their peers for their achievements.

• **Austin Health's Professor Ingrid Scheffer** has been awarded the Royal Australasian College of Physicians Eric Susman Prize in acknowledgement for her work in epilepsy.

For more than 18 years, Professor Scheffer has enabled the reliable diagnosis for many patients with previously obscure disorders, as well as helping to determine the underlying molecular cause of epilepsy. Her research has helped improve treatment for cognitive outcomes and genetic counselling and has had a major impact on the lives of people with epilepsy.

• **Congratulations to Associate Professor Michael Woodward**, whose contribution to wound management was recognised by a fellowship of the Australian Wound Management Association. He joins esteemed company that includes former Australian of the Year, Dr Fiona Wood.

To date, there have been just 12 fellowships awarded and three of those were to health professionals who have worked in the Austin Health Wound Clinic.

• **Austin Health physician and clinical pharmacologist Dr Sadanand Anavekar** has been recognised for his services to medicine and to the Indian community with a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours.

Dr Anavekar has more than 50 published articles in reputable cardiovascular journals. He has been both a National Health and Medical Research Council and a National Heart Foundation Research Fellow, conducting ground-breaking research into the role of the autonomic nervous system in hypertension.

Mentoring spinal-injured patients to adjust to life at home



Duke Trench-Thiedeman, mentor Mike Short and peer support worker, Naz Erdem, catch up at RTRC

Going home after a spinal cord injury in 1995, Mike Short said that he was left to figure out how to adjust to life outside rehabilitation by himself. So when he heard about a mentoring program for patients moving back to the community after rehabilitation, he was keen to participate.

The program was established by Austin Health's Spinal Community Integration Team (or 'SCIT') at the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre (RTRC).

"It's something that I wished had been around when I did rehab. It's great to have these guys who've been out there, figuring out how to do all these things for themselves, to be there for people," he said.

The SCIT Mentor Program Manager, Sal Dema, said mentors are linked up with participants who share specific interests, have a similar injury level and live nearby.

The mentors will provide support for patients during their transition home, particularly over

the first 12 months. They all have spinal cord injuries themselves, and have been living in the community for at least two years.

"If someone's interested in travel, we would aim to link them up with a mentor who's already had experience travelling," Mr Dema said. "Their key role is providing one-on-one support; just going out for a coffee and a chat and being a role model in terms of getting around the community and sharing experiences of life in a wheelchair."

The program is based on work that the Australian Quadriplegic Association (AQA) had already been undertaking, sending peer support workers out to the Royal Talbot from time to time to meet with patients.

Mr Dema said the program aims to formalise what the AQA had been doing and make it more readily available. SCIT also has plans to establish an online forum, so that people in rural areas have opportunities to link up with people who share their interests.

Benefits of end-of-life care plan

An Austin Health study has confirmed that advance care plans improve end-of-life care for patients.

In a study of more than 300 inpatients over the age of 80, lead investigator Dr Karen Detering and her team found that end-of-life wishes were more likely to be known and followed when patients were given an advance care plan (86 percent) compared to a control group, who were not (30 percent).

In addition, family members of patients who died experienced significantly less stress, anxiety and depression if the patient had completed an advance care plan.

Dr Detering said that the study supports the work that Austin Health has been doing with advance care planning; which is managed through a dedicated program called Respecting Patient Choices.

"We found that none of the relatives of the patients who received an advance care plan were at risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder or had clinically significant symptoms for

depression and anxiety." Dr Detering said. "However, a small number – some 20 percent – of the control group did, suggesting that advance care planning is of long-term benefit to relatives, as well as to patients."

Austin Health introduced the first Respecting Patient Choices program as a pilot in 2002. Last year saw the introduction of resuscitation plans for every patient over 75, to describe what life prolonging treatments they want.

You can find out more information about Respecting Patient Choices at our website: www.austin.org.au



An advance care plan can help patients to have their end-of-life wishes known and understood.



Talking with the professors

Our online podcast series 'Talking with the professors' helps you stay informed about the significant research taking place at Austin Health. Recent podcasts include:

ADVANCING TREATMENTS FOR HEART DISEASE: Austin Health's Department of Cardiology has a strong research focus, looking at finding better ways of predicting people's risk of heart attack. Hear our head of the department, and Associate Professor at the University of Melbourne, Omar Farouque speak about his department's research and advances in cardiology that are just around the corner.

PREVENTING THE DECLINE OF OUR AGEING POPULATION: Professor Chris Rowe at the Centre for Positron Emission Tomography at Austin Health leads the world on research into early diagnosis of dementia. Hear about Professor Rowe's groundbreaking new methods for identifying people likely to develop symptoms of dementia, and the potential for this research to lead to therapies that could slow or prevent its development.

Go online and listen to our experts at www.austin.org.au/podcasts

Volunteers honoured

Some of Austin Health's hardworking volunteers were recognised in the City of Banyule Community Volunteer Awards 2010 earlier this year.

Congratulations to Bernadette Jackson for winning the Banyule Community Volunteer of the Year award and Jean MacDonald for her Lifetime Achievement award. Their many years of dedication to Austin Health were recognised in the awards ceremony.

Mrs Bernadette Jackson, a retired school teacher, began as a volunteer canteen worker at Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital in 2001. Now she helps out in the Emergency Department and cancer wards.

Austin Health Life Governor, Mrs Jean MacDonald, was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of 50 years service to the 'Friends of Austin Health' fundraising auxiliary.

At 87 years of age, Mrs MacDonald has worked tirelessly for the Greensborough community via the auxiliary and for several other charities. She estimates

that she has raised tens of thousands of dollars for charity. She said, "I love it, it keeps my mind active."

If you are interested in volunteering at Austin Health, you can find out more at our website www.austin.org.au/volunteering/ or contact the Volunteer Services Manager via email volunteers@austin.org.au or telephone 03 9496 2337.



Jean MacDonald and Bernadette Jackson at the City of Banyule Community Volunteer Awards 2010.

Thank you for helping our Emergency Department



Emergency's Nurse Unit Manager,
Ms Janice Brown.

Earlier this year we asked supporters to help fund some additional equipment that was needed for our Emergency Department. We are delighted to report that the response has been terrific!

Many patients who come to our Emergency Department are seriously ill, some unable to breathe on their own. Through the generosity shown by our supporters, we will now be able to purchase two Oxylog

ventilators, one for each of our resuscitation rooms. These ventilators will provide patients with a non-invasive way to supply clear flows of oxygen – vital in emergency situations.

Emergency's Nurse Unit Manager, Ms Janice Brown said, "Our team are absolutely thrilled with the support we have received to help our patients. Thank you to all who donated. It's really fantastic."



Your stories...

It is very rewarding to hear stories from former patients about their time at Austin Health. Recently we received this letter from Cheryl.

"My name is Cheryl Spry. I live in Mildura and am aged 64. Almost five years ago I was a patient at the Austin Hospital under the care of Professor Chris Christophi and his team, including Professor Bob Jones. I felt fit and well, but in a routine pap smear test, my GP sent me for amongst other blood tests, a liver function test. There was no reason for this test, just general routine.

Eighty percent of my liver had to be removed, as a cyst was virtually destroying it. The Professor was amazed at how well I appeared, but he said within a short amount of time I would have been very ill. I had the operation at the end of September and he said by Christmas it would have been too late.

From my first encounter with everyone involved with my ECG, blood tests etc the day before the operation, to the nurse in charge of the Medi-Hotel at the Austin Hospital, to the amazing nurses who gave me the most wonderful attention and care and of course the very special doctors that attended my operation and also my post op care, I can only say thank you.

I feel very blessed and now this year, have the joy of welcoming my first grandchild into the world. Life goes on and I am happy to have a life. We all take many things for granted and I did too, but my life has new meaning.

I am now a supporter of Austin Health and whenever I can, give something back in the way of a donation.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to voice my thanks."

Thank you Cheryl for sharing your story with our supporters.

If you have an inspiring story to share about the work of Austin Health that you would like considered for our newsletter, please email it to fundraising@austin.org.au or write to Vitality Editor, Austin Health Fundraising Department, Locked Bag 25, Heidelberg Victoria 3084.

2010 Supporter Survey

– the results are in

A big thank you to everyone who completed and returned their Supporter Survey. We really appreciate it. We have now analysed the results and thought you might be interested in some of the findings.

- More than 71 percent felt our newsletter was informative.
- 66 percent of you felt that it was either 'important' or 'very important' that we report back to you on how your donations have been spent. While 34 percent felt that it 'wasn't very important'.
- 83 percent of you felt that we spend your donation wisely.
- Areas of Austin Health that are most important to you included: Aged Care, Cancer, Heart Conditions, Research, Education and Neurology.
- 79 percent are happy with the frequency of our communications.
- The majority of supporters have written a will and chosen not to include Austin Health.
- Overwhelmingly you prefer (95 percent) to receive communication via mail with only (5 percent) preferring email.

We did receive a number of general comments from supporters that require personal follow up from our team. We are attending to each of these individually, and ask for your patience as we get through them all.

Thank you again to everyone who took the time to complete the survey. Your feedback will help our fundraising team focus on areas that interest you most.

Thank you.

Yes! I will support the Brain Disorders Unit



Austin Health
ABN 96 237 388 063

Locked Bag 25, Heidelberg VIC 3084
Ph: (03) 9496 5753 Email: fundraising@austin.org.au

Title: Dr/Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ P/code: _____

Email: _____

Supporter No. (if known): _____

Please send me information about:

- Making a bequest in my Will to Austin Health; or
- I have already included Austin Health in my Will

Please accept my tax-deductible donation of:

\$35 \$50 \$75 \$150 \$_____ my choice

**Enclosed is my cheque/money order made payable to Austin Health
OR Please debit the amount I have indicated from my:**

VISA MASTERCARD AMEX AMEX ID

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____ Expiry Date: ____/____/____

Daytime Phone Number: _____

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

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