

Franklin Women

April 2018 Newsletter

This newsletter is very significant for Franklin Women as it marks a milestone for our organisation. Today, I have the privilege to announce the eight organisations in the health and medical research sector that have joined Franklin Women as inaugural [Academic Partners](#). Personally, as the founder of Franklin Women, this milestone means a lot, as it tells me that leading organisations in the sector value the contributions our community has made to creating a culture where women thrive, and they want to be aligned with what we stand for. It also confirms the impact Franklin Women is having and, even more importantly, the potential for much more. Like us, these eight organisations believe that there is great strength, and opportunity, when those with the same vision come together so that, collectively, their impact is greater than either could achieve on their own.

So it is with great pride that I welcome our inaugural [Academic Partners](#) – Cancer Council NSW, Centenary Institute, Garvan Institute of Medical Research, The George Institute for Global Health, MQ Health (Macquarie University Health Sciences Centre), Kolling Institute, UNSW Sydney Medicine and Sydney Medical School. I couldn't be more excited about working with them all over the coming two years to share knowledge, experiences and opportunities, so that our shared vision of creating a sector where women thrive is closer to becoming a reality.

I hope you enjoy reading a bit more about what our Academic Partners program entails, the organisations who have eagerly jumped on board and the people within these organisations who make it happen.

Happy reading!

Melina and the FW team



What happened this month

- Applications are open for the STEMM Top 5 – ABC [Media Residency Program](#)
- Professor Jennifer Pazour was been awarded the inaugural [Women in STEM2D Award](#) to help develop female leaders and support innovation in STEM
- Forbes released the 2018 [30 under 30 Asia-Pacific](#)
- Chief Scientist Dr Alan Finkel delivered the opening address at the [Quality in](#)

[Postgraduate Research Conference](#) – a must read for all HDR students!

- Our friends at the Women in Science Parkville Precinct have developed an [inclusive leadership training program](#) for their female health researchers
- The Committee for Economic Development of Australia released the [How unequal? Insights on inequality](#) report examining key ideas and concepts of inequality and opportunities for the future
- Applications have opened for the [Georgina Sweet Awards for Women in Quantitative Biomedical Sciences](#), closing May 31
- Applications are also open for [AMP's Tomorrow Fund](#), closing May 17
- The Education Council's final report was released, titled [Optimising STEM industry–school partnerships: inspiring Australia's next generation](#)
- Applications are open for [IMPACT7](#) 2018, where researchers have the opportunity to pitch their work and change the world
- Here's another report released this month from McKinsey on [The power of parity: Advancing women's equality in Asia Pacific](#)
- Association for Women in Science released a report on [Revolutionising the STEM entrepreneurship ecosystem](#)
- Here's the latest update from Research Australia on the [Medical Research Future Fund](#) funding allocation, and nominations are also open for the 2018 [Research Australia Health and Medical Research Awards](#) .



Career Profile

Meet [Renaë Ryan](#), Professor of Biochemical Pharmacology in the Sydney Medical School (who have come on board as one of the inaugural Franklin Women Academic Partners!) and Academic Director of SAGE at the University of Sydney. She loves holidays by the beach with family and friends, and champagne.



What is your training in the health or medical science field? I completed a BSc(Hons) and a PhD in Pharmacology at the University of Sydney. I then moved to the USA where I worked at Columbia University for one year. After receiving an NHMRC CJ Martin ECF (I was on the reserve list), I moved to the National Institutes of Health. I came back to Sydney on the CJ Martin to work with my mentor and colleague Professor Rob Vandenberg. We run our research group together in Pharmacology where we focus on the molecular mechanisms of transport proteins and are trying to make better treatments for chronic pain and cancer.

Tell us about your role at the University of Sydney? My current role is Professor of Biochemical Pharmacology and Academic Director of SAGE at the University of Sydney. I suppose I have had quite a linear career path. After my CJ Martin, I was awarded a Career Development Fellowship and then

appointed as Associate Professor, just after having my first baby. I had one more baby during my CDF and have been a teaching/research academic since 2015.

What is one of your favourite projects you are currently working on? I am really excited about one of our projects where we are looking at the functional impact of a range of recently identified glutamate transporter mutations in patients with episodic ataxia. This disease is characterised by periods of paralysis, is associated with epilepsy and migraine, and has only recently been linked to glutamate transporters. We are working with a group at McGill University that look at the mutant transporters in *Drosophila* (fruit flies) and they can do some really cool behavioural experiments to examine the impact of these mutations. So we can move from protein structure and function, through to physiology and behaviour to try to understand this disease.

What are some of the major 'outputs' from your work? A [*recent paper*](#) from our group was published in *Nature Communications*. This paper was the result of many years of work from a very talented student (Dr Scopelliti) and postdoc (Dr Font) in the lab. This was also part of a collaboration with a colleague that I worked with at Columbia University in 2004. In this paper, we identified the molecular basis for substrate selectivity of a glutamine transporter, ASCT2, that is upregulated in many cancers. ASCT2 is becoming an increasingly important target for novel therapeutics to treat glutamine dependent cancers, such as triple-negative breast cancer. I think this work emphasises the importance of basic science to provide knowledge about the structure and function of proteins that are important drug targets in disease.

How do you think your work contributes to the field and/or overall health of the community? Our work aims to understand the molecular mechanisms of transport proteins, in particular neurotransmitter and amino acid transporters. These transporters are implicated in a wide variety of diseases including episodic ataxia, chronic pain and cancer – which are three areas we are focused on at the moment. Our research ranges from understanding the basic structure of these proteins, to understanding how disease-causing mutations affect function, and finally to developing novel therapeutics that can hopefully treat these diseases.

Who do you collaborate with and how did those work relationships come about? Medical research is tough, so I try to collaborate with people that I get along well with and respect. I collaborate with several groups which keeps things interesting as I can think about broader areas, but it can be hard to manage at times. Most of my collaborations have come out of meeting people at conferences or people directly contacting me. Our research is very much at the basic science end of the spectrum so it is great to collaborate with people that are closer to the clinical and commercial ends.

Do you have any side interests or passions that you are looking to develop? I am very passionate about increasing the participation and retention of women in STEMM and also in leadership. My role as Academic Director of SAGE at Sydney University allows me to explore both of these areas. I am enjoying working towards something that I really believe has the capacity to make a difference to academic culture. This role has also exposed me to many different people and areas within the University and sector that I was not aware of before.

What food have you eaten too much in your life? I don't know...most probably many! I do love champagne though. My father's mantra is "everything in moderation and nothing will harm you". I'm not sure if I believe that, or do it well, but I try.

Introducing our Academic Partners!

Here our founder [Melina](#) shares how the Franklin Women Academic Partner initiative came about and what it entails. We have also included quotes from some of our eight Academic Partners on what participation means to them.



Anyone who has been following Franklin Women since we launched would know we are big advocates for taking time away from the day-to-day and dedicating it to big-picture 'strategic thinking'. As a volunteer organisation we are also the first to acknowledge how darned hard it is to prioritise this over usual business, and have previously written about this struggle in our [newsletter](#). Nevertheless, every six months we set aside a day, not to plan events or assess scholarship applications, but to review what Franklin

Women stands for, what we are doing well, where we can do more, and what we should stop or leave in the hands of many capable others. Over the years, it has become clear to us in these meetings that Franklin Women not only connects, champions and supports individuals working across the health and medical research sector, but also the *organisations* they come from. Our Academic Partners program is an acknowledgement of this.

The eight Academic Partners we welcome this year have all prioritised achieving gender equity, but we know this is no easy feat. Changes to policies and practices that remove the systemic barriers women face are desperately required, but along with this we need to change the culture. And culture is people. Changing culture requires leadership from the top, grassroots movements driving change from the bottom, and engagement of all those in between. Ensuring alignment and understanding between all these facets is not easy. Therefore we've developed initiatives that aim to bring together organisations working towards a diverse and inclusive health and medical research sector so we can communicate with and learn from each other.

Earlier this month we asked our Academic Partners about their vision for the future of health and medical research in Australia, and how gender equity and initiatives such as the Franklin Women Academic Partners may help to achieve it. Here is some of what they had to say:

“The health and medical research sector benefits all Australians as it delivers effective new treatments, better patient outcomes and improved quality of life. Our [Macquarie University’s] outstanding research scientists are major drivers of these medical breakthroughs – but we need new strategies to attract and retain our best research talent and support gender equality. Imagine a medical research sector that provides diverse and stable career opportunities in our universities, hospitals and industry; that is supported by investment certainty and adequate resources; that integrates consumer participation and encourages fundamental science. Just consider the benefits that will flow from such a strong, innovative, diverse and well-resourced medical research sector.”

– Macquarie University

“Across the entire research pipeline, from fundamental science to translational and implementation research, discoveries made by individuals and teams working within Australia’s health and medical research sector will underpin opportunities for an improved quality of life for all Australians. Our ability as a sector to meet the expectations of Australians will rely on, amongst many things, ensuring a diverse and well-supported sector enabled to deliver. The Kolling Institute has chosen to become an inaugural Academic Partner of Franklin Women in support of the many initiatives focused on diversity, inclusivity and helping to build careers of women in the health and medical research sector spearheaded by this organisation. We recognise that in order for Franklin Women to have long-term sustainability in this sector, true partnerships between universities, hospitals and medical research institutes with shared ideologies need to be established.”

– Kolling Institute

“The George Institute is committed to providing a safe, equitable, diverse and inclusive work environment where individual differences are respected and valued. Diversity and inclusion are vital for long-term success, and we want all our staff to have equal opportunities to achieve their full potential and create positive impact in health outcomes in Australia and globally. The George Institute has chosen to come on board as an Academic Partner because Franklin Women shares our vision for an Australian health and medical research sector where women are empowered, included and supported to pursue their work. Creating opportunities and building capacity for our women researchers is a priority for The George, and we are proud to be associated with an advocate like Franklin Women.”

– The George Institute for Global Health

“Garvan is committed to achieving diversity and inclusivity, particularly at the more senior levels of the Institute. We feel that by developing strategies and processes in partnership with other organisations that are on the same journey we will all benefit and achieve this cultural shift much more rapidly. We are already seeing institutional benefits from our participation in the Franklin Women Mentoring Program and believe that Franklin Women have taken exactly the right approach in addressing the important issues of gender equity and diversity and inclusivity more broadly.”

– Garvan Institute of Medical Research

For Franklin Women, the support we receive from our Academic Partners will not only allow us to sustainably deliver our activities and initiatives, but also ensure that grassroots organisations continue to have a voice in our sector's equity discussions. We look forward to bringing together our diverse experiences and learnings for greater collective impact, and contributing to a health and medical research sector where women thrive!

We proudly welcome Cancer Council NSW, Centenary Institute, Garvan Institute of Medical Research, The George Institute for Global Health, MQ Health (Macquarie University Health Sciences Centre), Kolling Institute, UNSW Sydney Medicine and Sydney Medical School as our inaugural [Academic Partners](#). We also intend to extend this welcome to more organisations who represent diverse stakeholders in our sector. For more information contact us on hello@franklinwomen.com.au.

We are loving right now...

Collaborations and collectives!! We at Franklin Women firmly believe that good things happen when people get together. So with that in mind, here are some of our favourite tips, tricks and links on collaborating:

- The [Impact Assembly](#) from PwC applies collaboration and creativity to solve big, complex problems.
- Here are some top collaborative [TED talks](#) on the topic of 'open-source, open world'.
- Gone are the days of the lonely scientist, so *Science* published this article on building (and leveraging) [successful collaborations](#).
- For those of us thinking about our current or future leadership styles, check out these top [8 tips for collaborative leadership](#) from Forbes.
- Need some practical assistance managing your collaborations? Here are some [online tools](#) that could help (we've been using Trello here at Franklin Women HQ, and it's working a treat!).
- Of course, our favourite collectives are of the more [furry kind](#)! (A cauldron of bats! Who knew?!)

We want to include your contributions in our newsletter. If you are doing something, or know about something, that you think other women in our field would be interested in, drop us a [line](#). We are all about sharing, promoting and collaborating between women in our field. Don't be shy, it might bring about a great opportunity! Want to receive our newsletters directly to your inbox? [Subscribe here](#).