



UNSW
Kirby Institute

Kirby Institute Annual Report 2024



UNSW
SYDNEY



The Kirby Institute is a world-leading health research institute at UNSW Sydney.

We work to eliminate infectious diseases, globally. Focused in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region, our work improves and protects human health, wellbeing and ability to thrive.

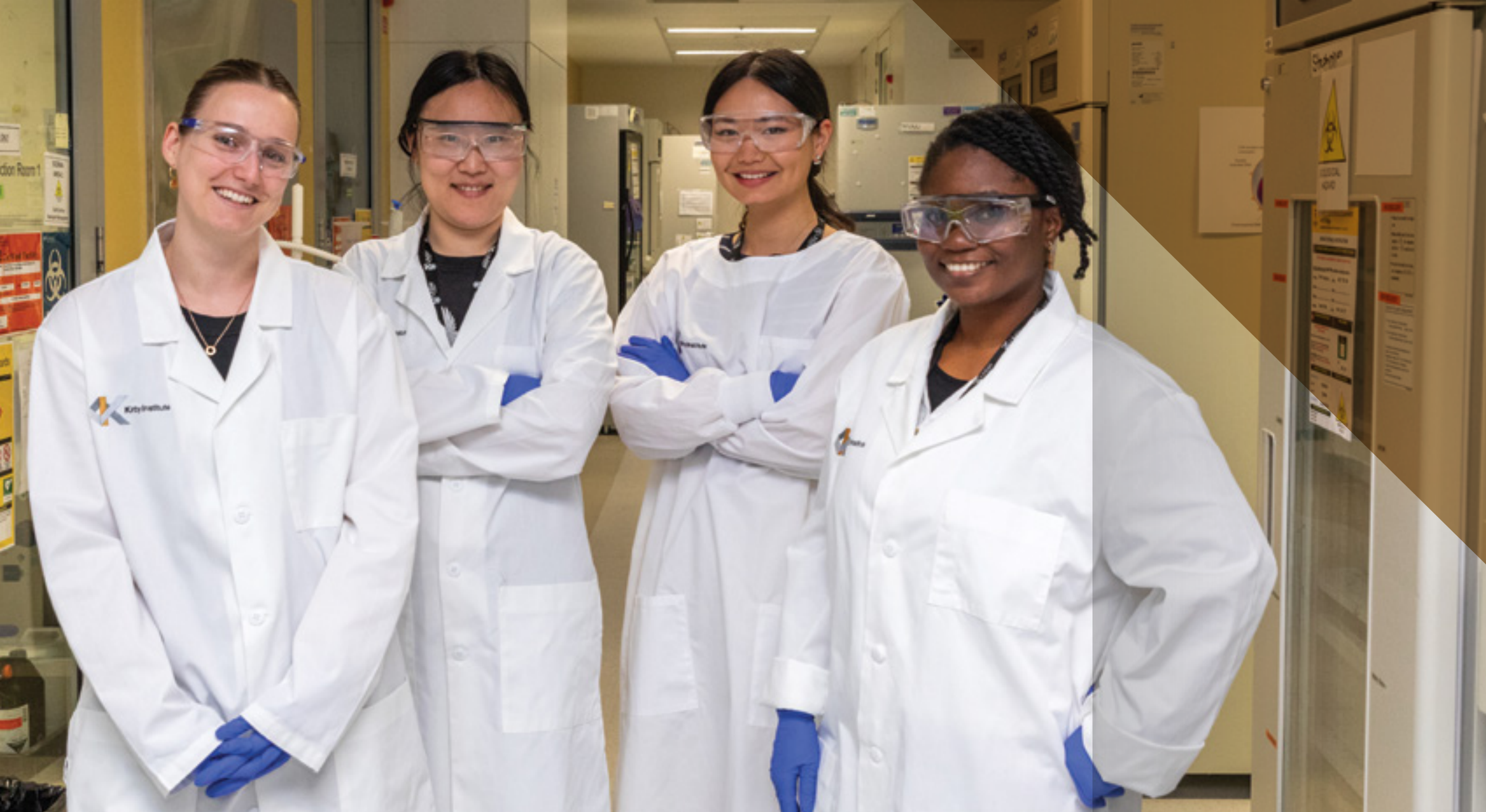
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The Kirby Institute at UNSW Sydney is located on the Traditional Lands of the Bidjigal Peoples.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia, and First Nations peoples’ continuing connection to culture, land, sea, waters and community.

We pay our respects to Elders both past and present.



A tribute to David

The late Scientia Professor David Cooper AC, inaugural director of the Kirby Institute, has been commemorated in a biographical memoir published in *Historical Records of Australian Science*.

Professor Cooper was among the first responders when the HIV epidemic reached Australia in the early 1980s and, together with his colleagues at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, diagnosed the first cases of HIV here. One of Australia's most distinguished academic leaders, he passed away in March 2018 after a short illness.

"David was a dear friend and a much-loved colleague who made a tremendous contribution to clinical and academic research, and the lives of his patients and his loved ones," says Scientia Professor Anthony Kelleher, who co-authored the memoir.

"The Kirby Institute
is his legacy, which we
continue with pride."

We are the Kirby Institute.

We fight disease by spreading solutions.

Infectious diseases move through individuals, communities and populations. At the Kirby Institute, we take the same approach with our solutions. As a global leader in health research, we put communities at the centre of everything we do. This focus allows us to create tests, treatments and cures that are more effective and more likely to succeed, driving us closer to eliminating infectious diseases worldwide.

We discover, develop, implement and evaluate solutions to infectious diseases. What makes these solutions unique is that they are designed to be scaled for maximum impact across diverse communities, populations and regions.

We do this via a highly successful, three-step approach:

1. Understanding.

We analyse the impact of infectious diseases on individuals and populations to uncover key insights.

2. Intervention.

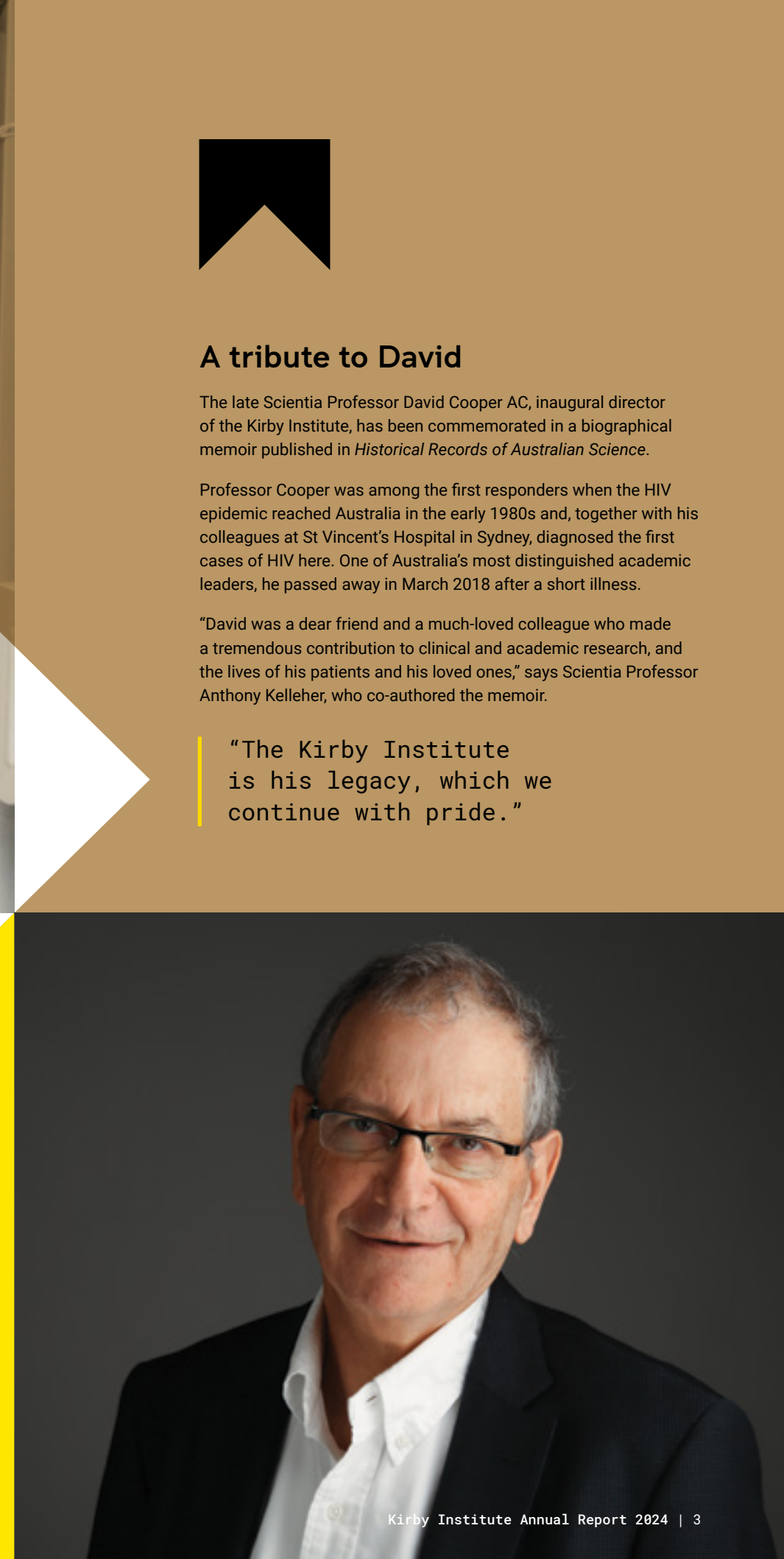
Using a holistic approach, we develop, test and evaluate innovative strategies for preventing and treating infectious diseases.

3. Implementation.

Collaborating closely with affected and at-risk communities, we deliver evidence-based health solutions tailored to their needs.

Equity drives us.

Infectious diseases disproportionately affect marginalised populations. We work with at-risk communities, ensuring the most effective interventions and treatments reach those who need them most.



Message from our Director

Scientia Professor Anthony Kelleher



It is with great pride that I recollect the remarkable progress made by the Kirby Institute in advancing health outcomes, both in Australia and globally, throughout 2024. It is incredibly fulfilling to see the dedication of our researchers, the achievements of our staff and students, and the impact of our work continuing to reinforce the Institute's reputation as being at the forefront of infectious disease research and public health.

As well as outstanding academic publications, research outcomes and professional awards, 2024 also saw a plethora of important funding awards. Notably, this included a \$25.9 million philanthropic gift from the Swire Group – the largest single donation in UNSW history – to advance cervical cancer elimination in the Pacific. It's a major step forward and a testament to the collaborative efforts between governments, local communities and research institutions like the Kirby Institute.

We also completed our strategic plan, which showcases our efforts from 2025 through to 2030. Crafted with input from both internal and external stakeholders and evaluated by an independent scientific committee, it outlines our commitment to conducting high-impact research in an evolving world landscape. You can read more about the strategy here in this annual report.

In other news, I am thrilled to announce this year saw the renaming of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Program to the Yandamanjang First Nations Health Research Program. This reflects a commitment to ensuring First Nations peoples are in charge of the research that impacts them, and I am incredibly proud of the collaborative work the team continues to carry out. We also launched a brand-new research program – the Asia and Pacific Health Program – which will focus efforts on improving sexual reproductive and maternal health in low- and middle-income countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

The First Nations Molecular Point-of-Care Testing Program team continued to deliver exceptional work throughout 2024, extending critical diagnostic services to some of the most remote communities across Australia and the region. Through their commitment to community empowerment and strong partnerships with First Nations health services, their efforts have enabled faster diagnosis and treatment for infectious diseases such as HIV, syphilis, hepatitis C and COVID-19 – often within hours and in places where timely laboratory access is limited. It is a transformative program and one all of us at the Kirby Institute are incredibly proud to be a part of.

On the HIV front, Australia continues to make encouraging progress, with the latest data showing a downward trend in diagnoses over the last decade, despite a slight increase in 2023. We remain focused on maintaining this positive momentum through targeted prevention efforts, research and support for those living with HIV.

From new research programs to continued community engagement, it has been an exciting year of progress. As always, I am proud of the hard work and dedication demonstrated by our team at the Kirby Institute. I hope you enjoy reading about these developments, as well as the other updates from our Institute.

Message from our Patron

The Honourable Michael Kirby AC CMG



In tumultuous times, as we experienced globally in 2024, the importance of organisations like the Kirby Institute, that champion human rights and health equity, cannot be overstated.

The researchers and other staff at the Kirby Institute continue to demonstrate their excellence, attracting major donations and research grants in an increasingly competitive funding environment. It gave me great pride to see the landmark investment of \$25.9 million from the Swire Group. This immense generosity will have a major societal and individual impact in advancing cervical cancer elimination in the Pacific.

Every donation, no matter the size, is a testament to the excellence and commitment of our researchers and staff here at the Kirby Institute. These generous contributions not only support innovative, life-changing research, but also open up new opportunities for groundbreaking, impactful discoveries and a better, more equitable future for all.

It is imperative that Australia should show leadership within our region to support and enhance locally-led health initiatives to drive down infectious disease. The establishment of the Asia and Pacific Health Program at the Kirby Institute, headed up by a true champion of collaboration, Professor Andrew Vallely, is an important development, and it will undoubtedly have a lasting impact on improving sexual, reproductive and maternal health across the region.

The past year also brought moments of reflection. I was greatly saddened by the death of Bill Whittaker, a tireless advocate who played an instrumental role in shaping Australia's response to HIV. He was truly a leader, and his contributions to policy, treatment access and community support leave an enduring legacy.

It was an honour to attend the 2024 David Cooper Lecture, where respected First Nations advocate and journalist Stan Grant offered a thought-provoking discussion on the changing role of religion, the impact of social media, the tech revolution and the essence of love and the human spirit. His insights challenged me and many others to consider the forces shaping our world, sparking meaningful conversations that will resonate into the future.

This year also marked the retirement of Professor Matthew Law after three decades of outstanding service and invaluable contributions at the Kirby Institute and its predecessors. I congratulate Professor Kathy Petoumenos, who follows in his footsteps with a well-earned promotion as head of the Biostatistics and Databases Program. I look forward to seeing the continued success of this critical research area, under her leadership.

I also extend my warmest congratulations to the other key and emerging leaders across the Kirby Institute on their professional promotions. Their success is a testament to the depth of talent and expertise within the organisation. In an age of ongoing global pandemics, I applaud the skills of Professor Raina MacIntyre and other scientists at the Kirby Institute for explaining their work and its significance to the general public.

Finally, I commend Professor Anthony Kelleher, the leadership team, and all staff and supporters of the Kirby Institute for their continued excellence. With such a dedicated and brilliant community driving this vital work forward, I have no doubt that 2025 will be another year of outstanding achievements.

News in numbers

2024 at a glance

In 2024, the Kirby Institute received:

\$47,493,218

From new and continuing external grants

\$13,028,892

In Australian Federal and State/Territory Government funding

\$7,244,487

Total in philanthropic funding



In 2024, the Kirby Institute had more than **2,000** media mentions across online, TV and print media.



At the Kirby Institute, we speak **28** different languages at home; we hail from **28** different birth countries and identify culturally with **45** different ethnicities.



48
NHMRC grants in total



8
NHMRC Partnership Grants



5
NHMRC Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies Grants



3
NHMRC Ideas Grants



13
Medical Research Future Fund Grants



23
NHMRC Investigator Grants



12
National Institutes of Health (NIH) Grants



4
NHMRC Centres of Research Excellence Grants



1
ARC Research Grant



312
staff members (including casuals)



12
PhD completions



10
academic promotions



21
Kirby Institute Seminar Series talks held



68
postgraduate students



22
international postgraduate students from **15** countries



1,047
collaborations in **53** countries on **6** continents



665
peer reviewed publications



1
new research program launched



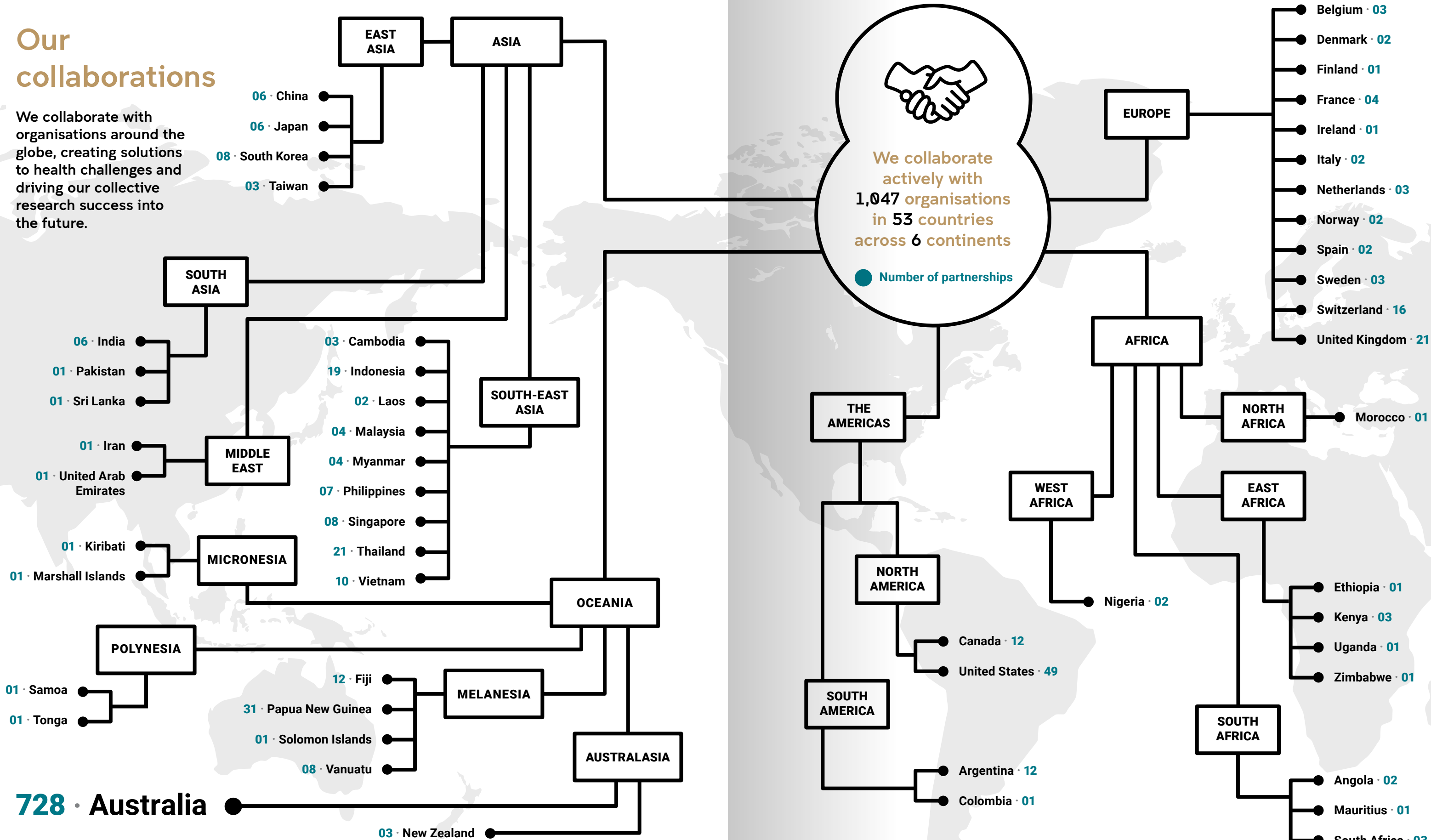
In 2024, the Kirby Institute launched a new research program focused on enhancing sexual, reproductive and maternal health in low- and middle-income countries across the Asia-Pacific region.

Led by Professor Andrew Vallely (left), who has been with the Kirby Institute since 2010, the Asia and Pacific Health Program aims to drive progress on critical global health priorities, including eliminating cervical cancer, ending parent-to-child transmission of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B, and addressing HIV and AIDS across the region.



Our collaborations

We collaborate with organisations around the globe, creating solutions to health challenges and driving our collective research success into the future.



Big in 2024

Headline news from the Kirby Institute



Record \$25.9m donation to advance cervical cancer elimination in the Pacific

In 2024, the Kirby Institute received the largest single philanthropic donation in its history to work with regional partners to tackle one of the deadliest preventable cancers in the Pacific.

The \$25.9 million donation from the Swire Group will enable the Kirby Institute to work with partners in Australia and the region to support vital cervical screening and treatment services for over 130,000 women in seven countries: Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

“We will work with countries across the Pacific over the next five years to advance our collective vision of a world free of cervical cancer and ultimately save thousands of lives across our region,” says Professor Andrew Vallely, who is co-leading the work at the Kirby Institute with Project Manager Vanessa Price.

Dr LeeAnne Panisi, Head, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in the Solomon Islands, says this funding presents an incredible opportunity for Solomon Islands to move forward.

“We see the burden at my end with patients,” she said. “I see the suffering. I see patients with end-stage cervical cancer in my clinic every week.”

The Kirby Institute has worked with partners in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Australia since 2010 to co-design and evaluate strategies for cervical screening and treatment in PNG and other countries in the region. The new Advancing Cervical Cancer Elimination in the Pacific (AdvanCE) program supported by the Swire Group builds on the successes of the earlier Eliminating Cervical Cancer in the Western Pacific (ECCWP) program (funded by the Australian Minderoo Foundation) and complements the Elimination Partnership in the Indo-Pacific for Cervical Cancer (EPICC) program (funded by the Australian Government) and recently expanded as part of the Quad Cancer Moonshot Initiative in September 2024. Collectively, these initiatives will support countries on their journey to implementing sustainable cervical cancer elimination strategies.

In-country leadership will be supported by UNSW's Kirby Institute with key Australian and regional partners the University of Sydney, Australian Centre for Prevention of Cervical Cancer (ACPCC), Family Planning Australia, and the Pacific Community (SPC).

ABOVE Aisha Kalmet (far right) conducts community awareness for cervical screening in Mele Village, Vanuatu. Photography: Nathan Price, Saltbush Media.
TOP RIGHT Dr Sania Nishtar and Scientia Professor Anthony Kelleher signing a Memorandum of Understanding in Canberra.
RIGHT A girl receives an HPV vaccination. Photography: Ruth Nicholls.

“Through Swire Shipping, we have been serving the Pacific Island nations for over 70 years. Tragically, in the Pacific, women are dying from a disease that is preventable, and this program targets its elimination. We are delighted to support the Kirby Institute, who have an excellent reputation in the region for highly impactful research conducted in partnership with local leaders, communities, and organisations.”

Sam Swire, Executive Director, the Swire Group

“Cervical cancer is the number one cause of cancer-related death among women in the Pacific and is devastating to women, families and entire communities across our region. This generous investment will enable countries like Samoa to partner with the Kirby Institute to advance our vision of a world free of cervical cancer.”

Hon. Fiamē Naomi Mata’afa, Prime Minister of Samoa



According to the World Health Organization, rates of cervical cancer in PNG are among the highest in the world, with Papua New Guinean women up to 14 times more likely to die from cervical cancer than women in Australia.



Improving health outcomes in Papua New Guinea

In November, the Kirby Institute and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (Gavi) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to formalise a partnership that will strengthen support to in-country partners and leaders to advance cervical cancer elimination in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and other countries in our region.

The MoU was signed by Gavi Chief Executive Officer Dr Sania Nishtar and the Kirby Institute’s director, Scientia Professor Anthony Kelleher.

The partnership between Gavi and the Kirby Institute will aid knowledge sharing, strategic planning, capacity building, advocacy and awareness, research and development, and scaling and replication across all areas of HPV vaccination in PNG. A specific focus will be to explore opportunities to integrate vaccination and screening services, particularly through mobile community outreach services that have to date provided same-day HPV screening and treatment to half of the 24,000 women screened in Western Highlands Province.

“Strategies that advance integration will promote equity of access, in particular for girls not attending school, underlining the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority’s commitment to leave no girl or woman behind as cervical cancer elimination progresses,” said Dr Paulus Ripa, a paediatrician and PNG Project Lead for the Eliminate Cervical Cancer in the Western Pacific Project (ECCWP).

Kirby 2030

Our next strategic plan

The world faces complex infectious diseases threats, made more complex by socio-political issues such as population growth, inequitable health systems and increasing gender/sexuality discrimination, plus the increasing rise of misinformation. This is why our vision to provide a trusted evidence base to prevent, diagnose and treat infectious diseases with a focus on health equity could not be more urgent.

Our Kirby 2030 Strategy sets out our clear ambition to conduct impactful research that addresses areas of greatest need in a shifting world. Developed through extensive internal and external consultation and reviewed by an external independent scientific committee, our strategy, which consists of four Pillars, will be implemented from 2025–2030.

Pillar 1

Excellence and Partnership: Provide global leadership and expertise across a broad spectrum of interdisciplinary infectious disease research, through partnerships.

Research that is innovative, rigorous and conducted in collaboration with affected communities can improve health, deliver equity and save lives.

We will build upon our track record in conducting high-quality, interdisciplinary research to further elevate our position as global leaders. This will involve improving internal systems for collaboration, empowering our research teams to be nimble and adaptive, and identifying strategic areas for research expansion.

Our collaborations across communities, governments, healthcare providers, academia and industry will continue to be the lifeblood of our success. Nurturing our diverse partnerships and leveraging our collective knowledge, skills and resources will lead to better-informed research solutions that can be rapidly targeted to, implemented for and trusted by those most in need.

Objectives

Research excellence: Expand and enhance our pioneering and high-quality research in infectious diseases and their impact.

Internal collaboration: Enhance cohesion across the full spectrum of research approaches and networks to improve our response to infectious diseases and related health challenges.

Partnership: Deepen and develop partnerships at international, national and local levels.

Agility: Leverage our capability to effectively anticipate, identify and respond to emerging challenges and threats.

Pillar 2

Societal Impact: Drive translation of research into health policy and practice to improve health and societal outcomes.

As researchers, we cannot just develop a health solution – we have to ensure our solutions can be implemented in the real world.

At the Kirby Institute, we undertake research that makes a real difference to the lives of people impacted by infectious disease.

We know research conducted in close collaboration with community has the best outcomes for success. Driven by our strong experience in community engagement, we will further strengthen the participation of community in our work, from research design through to the communication of our findings. Our close existing relationships with industry also means we are well-placed to continue our collaborations to find new ways to diagnose, treat and prevent disease. Over the course of the plan, we will enhance these relationships and, where strategic, identify new partners.

We believe individuals and communities can benefit from our knowledge to inform health decision-making. It is our goal to find better ways to share our researchers’ expertise through relevant and appropriate public platforms, and ensure we are communicating the right messages, in the appropriate places, to the people who most need to hear them.

Objectives

Stakeholder engagement: Further enhance our engagement and collaborations with communities and other stakeholders to define, conduct and translate our research.

Communicate success: Amplify our influence by improving our capability to disseminate research findings and best practice.

Demonstrate impact: Better leverage evaluation in order to demonstrate our impact across research, education and public health.

Pillar 3

Innovation: Ensure our organisation is adaptive and responsive to change.

Like all living things, infectious diseases constantly evolve to survive and evade elimination. This is why the Kirby Institute needs to be constantly adapting.

Our pursuit of research excellence and health impact is reliant on a highly functioning, agile and collaborative organisation that is robust and can support researchers to do what they do best.

We will conduct an analysis of our institute-wide systems and processes and identify areas where we can innovate to create better harmony and a more productive environment for our researchers. Strengthening our governance and financial models will also ensure the best allocation of our resources to generate efficient and impactful research.

Objectives

Sustainability: Strengthen our governance and financial sustainability.

Efficiency: Ensure complementarity of our research and administrative processes and systems.

Pillar 4

Cultivation: Nurture our people and culture.

Our people and culture are our greatest asset, and our strategy is designed to support every staff member or student to perform to the best of their ability.

Our research history, working with populations most impacted by disease, has taught us that promoting diversity, equity and inclusion is not only just the right thing to do – it ensures the best outcomes. Ensuring our research teams are diverse and representative will make every element of our strategic plan more realistic to achieve. Part of this is a deep understanding of our responsibility to Australia’s First Nations people, and a strong commitment to ongoing cultural training and supporting First Nations leadership of First Nations research.

Objectives

Diversity: Promote diversity, equity and inclusion.

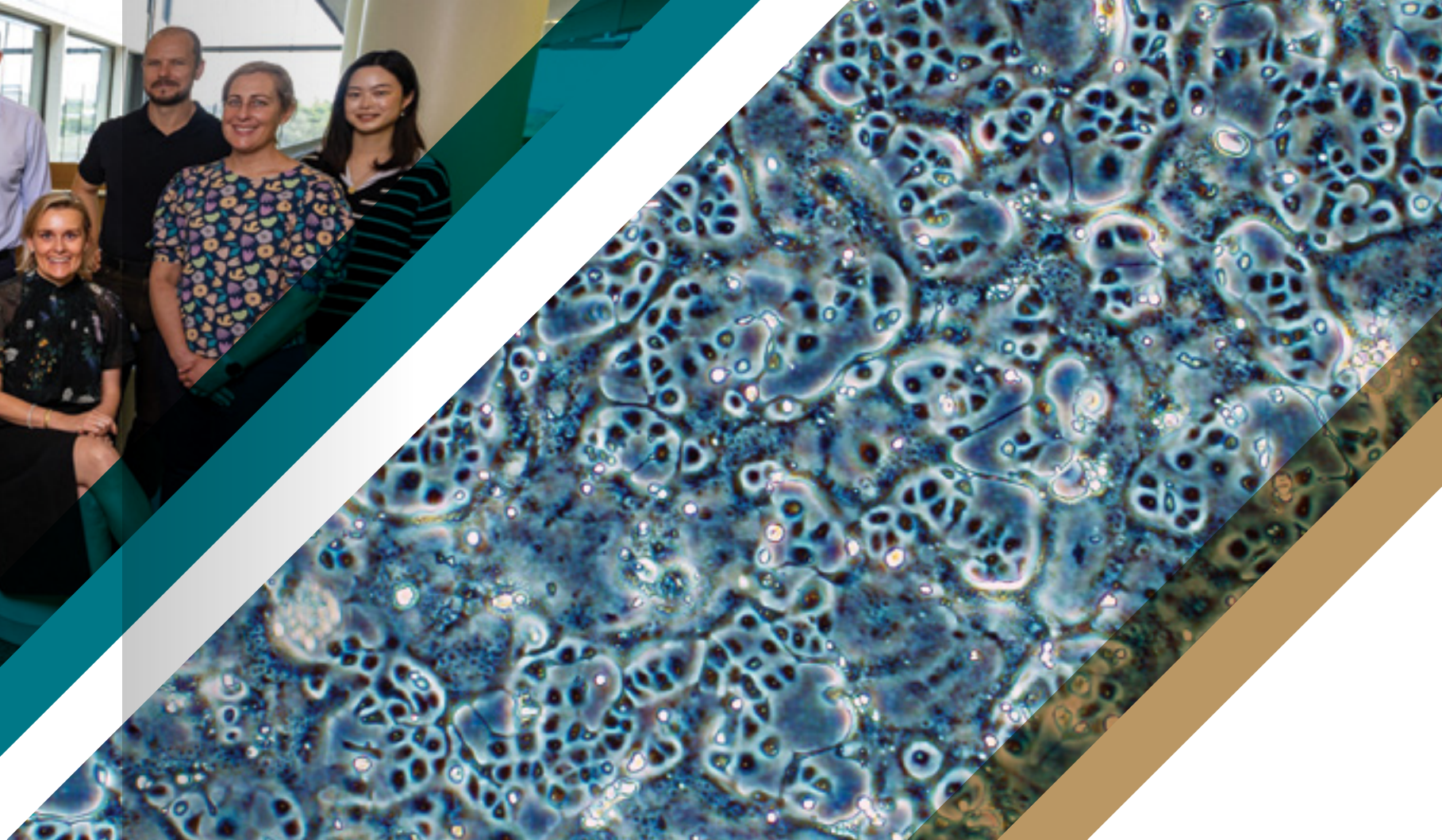
Retention: Future-proof the Kirby Institute as a workplace of choice.

Teamwork: Bring our community closer together, bolster knowledge-sharing and foster creativity.

Our research

At its core, our mission is very simple: to ensure no infectious disease is left untreated.

While our focus is on Australia and the Asia-Pacific region, our work creates ripple effects that improve human health and wellbeing worldwide.





Yandamanjang: We are all walking together

In acknowledgement and celebration of the expanding growth and impact of First Nations-led research, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Program at the Kirby Institute was renamed the Yandamanjang First Nations Health Research Program at a special event.

The name Yandamanjang (yah-nuh-mun-yung) was developed in close consultation with the Gujaga Foundation, the peak organisation leading language, cultural and research activities within the La Perouse Aboriginal community, the traditional lands where the Kirby Institute is located.

“Yandamanjang means we are all walking together, which symbolises our approach to First Nations Research at the Kirby Institute,” says Robert Monaghan, a Bundjalung and Gumbaynggir man and Manager of Yandamanjang at the Kirby Institute.

Alongside launching the new name, an artwork was designed to visually represent the story of the Kirby Institute approach to First Nations research. Created by First Nations artist Daniel Evans, the work symbolises ‘connection through unity’.

2024 in review

The Kirby Institute’s First Nations staff, working in partnership with non-Indigenous researchers, have made a number of impressive research achievements over the past year. These include:

- In June 2024, Project Manager Emily Phillips was invited as a panellist representing Indigenous people at the Multi-stakeholder Hearing on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), held at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York.

- The First Nations Molecular Point-of-Care Program continues to deliver on-the-spot testing and diagnosis for sexually transmissible infections and respiratory infections in rural and remote Australian communities. With many remote communities located hundreds of kilometres away from laboratory testing facilities, there are often major inequities in healthcare access, leading to disproportionate infection rates and their adverse consequences, such as pelvic inflammatory disease and preterm and low birth weight babies, among Aboriginal communities. Timely diagnosis and treatment not only has individual health benefits, but can also positively impact public health due to reduced onward transmission.
- The 2024 *Blood borne viral and sexually transmissible infections in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: Annual surveillance report* is produced for use by a wide range of health service providers and consumers, and particularly First Nations health services and communities.
- HTLV-1 is a significant global health threat, and in Australia it is endemic in First Nations peoples. There is currently no vaccine, cure or direct-acting antiviral treatment, but Kirby Institute researchers are working in partnership with local communities to uncover solutions.
- The SCALE-C Study is evaluating the impact of a community-based “test and treat” intervention on hepatitis C prevalence among individuals who attend Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) and other Aboriginal medical services.
- In 2024, COCO (Check it Off, Check it Out), a sexual health initiative, received approval from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specialist human research ethics committees in WA, the NT and SA. Six ACCHS were recruited across four jurisdictions and baseline data collection was initiated.

ABOVE Robert Monaghan, artist Daniel Evans and Scientia Professor Anthony Kelleher unveil the new artwork for the Yandamanjang First Nations Health Research Program. Photography: Maria Boyadjis.

OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM LEFT The new artwork symbolises ‘connection through unity’; the Kirby Institute’s First Nations Point-of-Care Testing Program team.

Since launching in 2013, the First Nations Molecular Point-of-Care Program is estimated through modelling to have reduced the risk of pelvic inflammatory disease and preterm births among young First Nations women with sexually transmissible infections.

Federal budget allocation expands access to STI testing

When the Federal Budget was delivered in May, it included the announcement of funding to support a Medicare rebate for molecular point-of-care testing for sexually transmissible infections (STIs) in remote communities across Australia.

The budget decision was based on a submission by the Kirby Institute, with support from the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), and means that remote health services can continue to offer highly effective and timely tests for STIs.

This rebate is the first Medicare item to provide health services with reimbursement for an infectious disease point-of-care test and will provide a sustainable and enduring funding model for the future.



The Kirby Institute First Nations Point-of-Care team was nominated for a Universities Australia Shaping Australia Award in the Community Champions category. This was due to the team’s impactful and highly collaborative work addressing the issue of long wait times for STI results in rural and remote Australia by utilising point-of-care testing that can provide results and treatment within the same day. This means they can better protect women and keep their babies healthy. The team also won the UNSW Medicine and Health Shaping Healthcare Award in 2024.



Tackling neglected tropical diseases

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a group of 21 health conditions recognised by the World Health Organization (WHO) as global health priorities. They affect over 1.5 billion people, primarily those living in low-income, rural and remote communities, and include intestinal worms-related diseases, skin diseases such as scabies and mosquito-borne diseases such as lymphatic filariasis and dengue.

Tackling these diseases is essential to break cycles of poverty and enable communities to thrive. Accordingly, WHO and its member countries have signed up to the 2030 Road Map, which sets an action agenda to achieve control and elimination targets.

The Kirby Institute is a WHO Collaborating Center for NTDs, and our global health research contributes evidence in support of the road map. It also supports countries to plan, implement and evaluate their interventions.

Professor Susana Vaz Nery, who leads the NTDs Research Group, says “a combination of strategies, integrated across diseases and technical disciplines where appropriate, is needed to reduce the impact of NTDs and accelerate progress towards sustainable control and elimination.”

Kirby Institute activities on NTDs have expanded in recent years, funded by multiple grants from the NHMRC and Australian Government, and contracts with international non-governmental organisations. Major advances during 2024 include initiating surveys in Angola in preparation for a large-scale trial on new approaches to control river blindness, and the continuation of surveys in Vanuatu to track the impact of elimination programs.

In Australia, we collaborated with community and government sectors on the preparation of a dossier to submit to WHO on elimination of trachoma as a public health problem in remote communities of central and northern Australia. We were also awarded a new Centre of Research Excellence grant to address NTDs in the Asia-Pacific Region, and UNSW's first Synergy Grant, to investigate the public health role of the new antiparasitic agent, moxidectin.

“We work in partnerships with governments and communities as well as international agencies to confront these preventable causes of human suffering,” says Scientia Professor John Kaldor, head of the Global Health Program.

ABOVE The Kirby Institute is collaborating with the Angolan Ministry of Health and The Mentor Initiative to conduct a trial looking at new approaches to control river blindness. Preparatory work includes assessing breeding sites of the blackfly that transmits river blindness (left), and conducting fingerprick blood samples as part of a survey of onchocerciasis and loiasis in Angola (right). Photography: Marta Palemeirim.

OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP The team at a private midwife clinic in Bandung, Indonesia; conducting tests; health service staff at a primary care clinic. Photography: Centre for Tropical Medicine, Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM).

Positive progress

- ✦ NTD field studies were conducted in Angola, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands.
- ✦ Membership of the WHO NTD strategic and technical advisory group (STAG) allows a direct contribution to defining WHO priorities on NTDs.
- ✦ Ongoing recognition as a WHO Collaborating Center ensures our research findings can contribute to global health policy.
- ✦ Membership of several NTDs working groups has resulted in co-authorship of three WHO guidelines.
- ✦ Two PhD and three MSc students carried out important research in the NTDs Research Group, and 14 impactful NTDs research papers were published.

Collaborating for change

Without appropriate treatment, infections and viruses can be passed from mother to child through pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding. This can lead to infants developing serious health problems, some of which can be fatal.

In the Asia-Pacific region, despite notable progress, Indonesia faces barriers in scaling up efforts to reduce infection rates of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B, particularly among pregnant women. As a result, Indonesia remains one of the World Health Organization's priority countries requiring intervention to help eliminate mother-to-child transmission of these infections, otherwise known as the ‘triple elimination initiative’.

Triple elimination depends on the combined efforts of advocates, policymakers, health providers and community representatives.

During 2024, the Kirby Institute collaborated and continues to work with civil society organisations to address this critical health issue. Under the MENJAGA and DUALIS trials, a valuable partnership has been formed with the Indonesian Midwives Association. This involves working with private midwife clinics and primary health centres to scale up testing of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B in pregnant women during antenatal care visits to help lower transmission rates.

Our team and partners from the Universitas Gadjah Mada and Universitas Sebelas Maret in Indonesia, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), have generated new evidence on the barriers and solutions to implementing and expanding point-of-care testing for these infections.

“The Bogor Chapter of the Indonesian Midwives Association has seen firsthand how early intervention can save lives,” says midwife Hajah Ade Karnita, Former Head of the Bogor Chapter of the Indonesian Midwife Association. “By integrating HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B testing into routine antenatal care, we are not only improving maternal health but also ensuring that future generations are free from these preventable infections.”

Professor Virginia Wiseman, from the Surveillance and Evaluation Research Program at the Kirby Institute and LSHTM, co-leads the MENJAGA and DUALIS studies with Professors Ari Probandari and Shunmay Yeung. “Midwives are a major provider of reproductive and maternal services in Indonesia,” she says. “It would be impossible to reach triple elimination without their close engagement.”



5 mins with...

Dr Lila Wulandari
Lecturer, Surveillance and Evaluation Research Program

As a medical doctor trained in Indonesia and later working as a general practitioner, I witnessed firsthand the burden and impact – both on people's quality of life and the health system as a whole – of infectious diseases. I often felt addressing these challenges solely in a clinical setting, and treating rather than preventing, wasn't enough.

This realisation led me to shift my focus to working with communities, advocating for prevention and early screening, influencing policies and creating an enabling environment that helps people stay healthy. I strongly believe all these efforts must be grounded in evidence, which is why I feel incredibly fortunate to work in public health today.



Improving anal cancer screening

A recent study led by Dr Jeff Jin and colleagues at the Kirby Institute, and supported by the Glendonbrook Foundation, has uncovered better ways to screen for anal cancer in gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men.

Currently, testing for high-risk human papillomavirus (HPV) is an important part of detecting anal cancer and anal cancer precursor lesions. However, while this test is effective at finding potential health concerns, it can also detect other non-serious issues. As part of the Study of the Prevention of Anal Cancer (SPANAC), new research explored how to make testing more accurate while reducing potentially unnecessary tests and follow-up procedures.

Researchers looked at whether combining high-risk HPV testing with another test called anal cytology, which checks for abnormal cells in the anal canal, could improve results. The study followed 475 gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (of whom about 36 per cent were living with HIV) over a 12-month period, and compared five different testing methods that combined high-risk HPV results with cytology.

Out of these methods, two were shown to be successful at finding serious anal cell changes while avoiding false positive tests and, as a result, reduced the number of people needing further procedures by roughly 20 per cent.

“By reducing unnecessary follow-ups, we can ease the burden on both patients and the healthcare system, while still ensuring anal cell changes that may lead to anal cancer are detected early.”

Dr Mary Poynten, Group Leader of the Anal Cancer Prevention Research Group

ABOVE A patient checking into the Sydney Sexual Health Centre.

By the numbers

An at-a-glance look at some of the findings from the *HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections in Australia: Annual surveillance report*, which was published in 2024.

#1

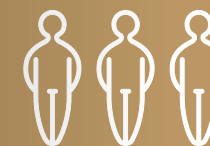
Chlamydia was the most frequently diagnosed sexually transmissible infection (STI) in 2023.



From 2014–2023, there was a 127% increase in the gonorrhoea diagnosis rate.



HIV diagnoses have reduced by 33% over the last decade.



80% of infectious syphilis diagnoses were among males.



Between 2014 and 2023, infectious syphilis diagnoses more than doubled.

Syphilis rates on the rise

New research published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, of which Dr Belinda Hengel was the lead researcher, shows that infectious syphilis cases in women of reproductive age in Australia have increased by more than 500 per cent over a 10-year period.

Notification rates for congenital syphilis, where a pregnant person with syphilis passes the infection on to their baby during pregnancy or birth, also rose significantly. The research also showed that the pregnant parent of almost half the infants born with congenital syphilis had not received antenatal care, and that cases for each were higher for First Nations than non-Indigenous people.

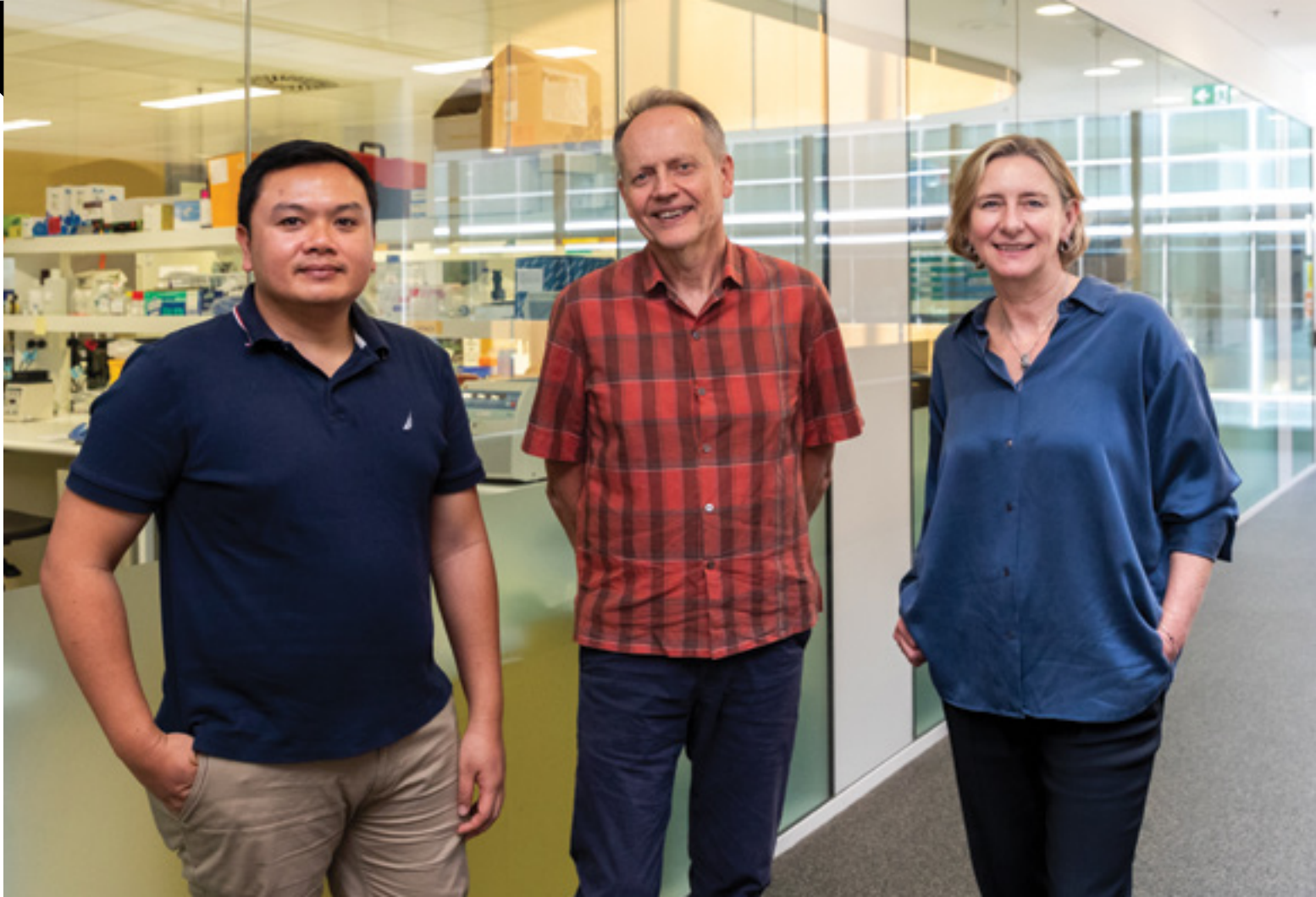
“These rises, which affected both non-Indigenous and First Nations women, together with our finding that many pregnant parents of infants born with congenital syphilis received neither adequate antenatal care nor testing and treatment for syphilis, suggests more needs to be done to ensure equitable access to appropriate testing and antenatal care, especially for First Nations people,” says Robert Monaghan, Manager of the Yandamanjang First Nations Health Research Program.

With this in mind, in September 2024, three co-design workshops with NSW Health services, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and non-governmental organisations were conducted across NSW to gain providers’ perspectives on the patient-centred and culturally-safe prevention and treatment of congenital syphilis. These were carried out under the BBV & STI Research, Intervention and Strategic Evaluation Program, or BRISE. Findings suggest the need for a comprehensive, co-designed approach that combines incentives, education, community engagement and workforce development.

Spotlight on sexual health

The Australian Study of Health and Relationships (ASHR), coordinated by the Kirby Institute, is Australia’s most important study of sexual and reproductive health. Conducted once a decade, it offers a snapshot of the sexual health and wellbeing of the Australian population and provides information essential for the development of policy and the delivery of sexual and reproductive health programs across Australia.

Data collection for the third ASHR survey (ASHR3) took place between March 2023 and April 2024. Preliminary findings were first presented in September and November 2024, with topics including HIV and STI testing, online dating, reproductive coercion and cervical screening. Qualitative interviews, analyses and publication will continue in 2025.



Long COVID study shows positive improvement in patients

Long COVID is a globally emerging syndrome of potential major public health significance. According to the World Health Organization, common symptoms can include fatigue, shortness of breath and cognitive dysfunction, although more than 200 different symptoms have been reported to date.

In positive news, research led by staff at the Kirby Institute and St Vincent’s Hospital Sydney, published in *Nature Communications*, showed that long COVID abnormalities can resolve over time.

The ADAPT study followed people who contracted COVID-19 during Australia’s first wave, as well as a matched control group, for up to two years. It combines systematic self-reported health information collected from patients with detailed analysis of bloods specimens in the laboratory.

Results showed that biomarkers for long COVID that were present in patients at eight months have largely resolved by 24 months.

“People are still living with long COVID symptoms, which can be debilitating, many months and sometimes years on from initial COVID-19 infection,” says Dr Chansavath Phetsouphanh, first author on the paper and Senior Lecturer at the Kirby Institute. “Through our research, it’s encouraging to find significant improvements in blood markers, indicating abnormal immune functions can resolve over time.”

ABOVE Dr Chansavath Phetsouphanh, Scientia Professor Gregory Dore and Professor Gail Matthews, who work on the ADAPT study.
TOP RIGHT Professor Raina MacIntyre demonstrating the ‘Able Resolve’ biosurveillance exercise at Camp Smith, Hawaii.



Preparing first responders for potential pandemics

COVID-19 had an immense impact worldwide, especially on public health, economics and global trade. But with better preparedness, it is possible that some of the negative impacts of the pandemic could have been avoided. In 2024, the Kirby Institute’s EPIWATCH capability – an advanced AI system for global epidemic surveillance – was selected to support a US military exercise.

‘Able Resolve’ was a biosurveillance exercise that prepared military responders at US IndoPacific Command on best-practice ways to detect and respond to an infectious disease emergency. Targeted at key personnel in the military, it involved a biological-threat simulation underpinned by the EPIWATCH early warning system and debrief summaries to prepare responders in areas including procedures, logistics, communications and escalation. The Kirby Institute team from the Biosecurity Program prepared a special dashboard for participants containing simulated data for the exercise, which enabled EPIWATCH to be showcased across different parts of the US Department of Defence.

In September 2024, the Able Resolve exercise presented a scenario of an unfolding mystery epidemic in the Pacific, which develops into a pandemic. The Kirby Institute team created a range of multimedia experiences to accompany the exercise, including news stories and videos. Dummy data was fed into a version of the EPIWATCH real-time dashboard enabling participants to monitor and analyse the epidemic, while real-time decision-making was supported by an app where participants could record and observe responses.

More than 135 representatives from militaries in the US, UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada participated in the two-week program, which took place at Camp Smith in Hawaii.

“By simulating real-time scenarios and using the EPIWATCH platform, Able Resolve helped responders make informed and swift decisions when it mattered most,” says Professor Raina MacIntyre, who heads up the Biosecurity Program at the Kirby Institute and founded EPIWATCH. “These exercises will continue to play a key role in enhancing our collective resilience against global health threats.”



A screenshot of the EPIWATCH platform used in the ‘Able Resolve’ biosurveillance exercise.

Positive progress

- ✦ The Infection Analytics Program (IAP) at the Kirby Institute published work comparing immune responses to ‘old’ COVID-19 booster vaccines versus ‘updated’ boosters to newer variants. Their work demonstrated that over all of the published studies to date, updated boosters provide around a 1.4-fold higher antibody response to future variants.
- ✦ Staff from the Kirby Institute also conducted research on mpox vaccines. Researchers from IAP analysed the immune responses and immune protection from different mpox vaccines and predicted that vaccine-induced immunity should provide protection for a substantial time.
- ✦ A research team led by the Kirby Institute’s Dr Chansavath Phetsouphanh was awarded almost \$1 million by the Australian Government Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) to further investigate the immune profile and impacts of long COVID to inform treatment development for the growing public health challenge.

HIV efforts globally continue

Over the last decade, HIV diagnoses in Australia have continued to follow a downward trend. Overall HIV diagnoses have reduced by 33 per cent over the last decade, with particularly significant reductions among Australian-born gay and bisexual men, where diagnoses have reduced by 64 per cent.

However, there is still much work that needs to be done in other countries around the world, where researchers at the Kirby Institute are partnering with local researchers and communities.

Here's a rundown of just some of the projects underway in 2024:

- Indonesia.** A retrospective cohort study supported by the Kirby Institute has shown that the rate of HIV is high among men who have sex with men, and transgender women attending clinics in Jakarta and Bali, Indonesia. The study looked at medical records from five clinics over a multi-year period to give a better view of HIV incidence among these populations. Findings indicated very high prevalence and incidence rates, and that young people, especially those aged 18–24, were most at risk of acquiring HIV.
- Fiji.** Fiji is experiencing an HIV outbreak, with more than 1,000 cases diagnosed in 2024. Supported by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Kirby Institute – in partnership with Fiji National University, Fiji Drug Awareness and the Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) – is assessing the needs and challenges surrounding HIV prevention, testing, and treatment and care services for people who use and inject drugs. Results will inform public health responses, including interventions to improve health outcomes, limit HIV transmission and reduce the harms associated with drug use in Fiji.
- Papua New Guinea.** The Kirby Institute has received a three-year, \$5 million grant from the Australian Government to support our continued work in Papua New Guinea (PNG) through the ACTUP project. This funding will help provide faster, more accessible point-of-care HIV testing for infants and pregnant women, monitor HIV drug resistance and improve treatment for those affected. It will also strengthen PNG's efforts to prevent mother-to-child transmission of syphilis and hepatitis B, with a focus on increasing newborn hepatitis B vaccinations.

ABOVE Professor Angela Kelly-Hanku (third from left) with ACTUP colleagues in Papua New Guinea.

RIGHT Kirby Institute Director Scientia Professor Anthony Kelleher (fifth from right) with the 2023–2024 CHART cohort.



CHART-ing progress on HIV

The Cooper HIV/AIDS Research Training (CHART) Program* was proposed by the late Professor David Cooper, inaugural director of the Kirby Institute. It aims to inspire and increase the number of skilled and experienced researchers in the Asia-Pacific region, and to address local HIV-related priorities. In the 2023–2024 cohort, there were nine participants, who represented Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Philippines, Fiji and Indonesia. One participant presented research at the 2024 Asia-Pacific AIDS & Co-Infections Conference (APACC) in Hong Kong, while another submitted their research for publication.

**The CHART Program is supported by an unconditional education grant from ViiV Healthcare. The Kirby Institute is a global partner of the Structured Operational Research Training Initiative (SORT IT), coordinated by TDR, the Special Programme for Research Training in Tropical Diseases, hosted at the World Health Organization.*



A fond farewell

Professor Matthew Law, who retired from the Kirby Institute in 2024 after 30 years of service, was head of the Biostatistics and Databases Program. A biostatistician with a background in mathematics and statistics, his research interests included randomised trials, observational cohorts and linkage studies in HIV, hepatitis C and sexually transmissible infections.

Professor Law's research had a strong emphasis on large, multidisciplinary collaborations. He worked closely with clinicians across the country to establish the Australian HIV Observational Database in 1999, which is now able to assess very long-term treatment outcomes. He was also part of the leadership teams that established leDEA Asia-Pacific's regional cohorts, for adults in 2003 and children in 2006. These studies are the largest, multi-country cohorts examining antiretroviral treatment and outcomes in HIV positive patients in the region and were critical in regional policy and treatment guidelines.

“What keeps me going is that – after all the bluff and bluster, expert opinion, shameless self-aggrandisement, mindless sloganeering and aspirational targets – ultimately simple data, from well-designed studies, analysed appropriately, will tell the truth.”

Professor Matthew Law

Positive progress

- The Kirby Institute's 'Monitoring HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) uptake in Australia' project released its 11th report. Key findings were that between 1 April 2018 and 30 June 2024, 80,254 people were dispensed PrEP subsidised by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) at least once. The number of individuals dispensed PrEP within the past 12 months increased to a new high of 47,172 in quarter 2 2024.

- Some of the Kirby Institute team visited Parliament House ahead of World AIDS Day for a special parliamentary breakfast where researchers, community members and politicians discussed progress towards the virtual elimination of HIV transmission by 2030.

- In one of the largest HIV treatment studies conducted in individuals experiencing failure of their standard first-line regimen, 48-week results from the D²EFT study, published in

The Lancet HIV, demonstrated that two newer simplified HIV treatment options were at least as effective as more standard treatment approaches. D²EFT enrolled 821 people across 14 low- and middle-income countries, providing important global data to support the latest WHO treatment guidelines. Final 96-week results will be released in 2025.



Improving hepatitis B care in Australia

Hepatitis is an infection of the liver that causes a range of health concerns, some of which can be fatal, including liver failure and liver cancer. While there are several strains of viral hepatitis, types B (HBV) and C (HCV) cause chronic infection and are two of the most prevalent types worldwide.

The REACH-B Study, or REal-World Assessment of People Living with Chronic Hepatitis B in Australia, is a national observational cohort study currently being undertaken by the Kirby Institute in collaboration with health services and clinics across the country.

It aims to gather health data on people with chronic hepatitis B infection in Australia and, as a result, use that information to help improve health outcomes, resources and levels of care. That's because only 69 per cent of Australians living with chronic hepatitis B have been diagnosed and just 13 per cent are receiving treatment – well below the government's National Hepatitis B Strategy target of 20 per cent by 2022. The study aims to change that.

17
sites nationwide taking part in the study

8
new sites opened in 2024

x2
The number of people included in the study almost doubled in 2024

3,616
The amount of people living with chronic hepatitis B that the study has collected data on by the end of 2024

69%
The percentage of Australians living with chronic hepatitis B who have been diagnosed

REACH-B is a major study, collecting data from up to 7,500 people living with chronic hepatitis B through health services every six to 12 months for at least five years.

“REACH-B and its sub-studies are vital to better understand the hepatitis B treatment landscape in Australia,” explains Principal Investigator, Professor Gail Matthews. “The resulting data will be crucial to understanding the chronic hepatitis B stages of care, identify the areas and populations where targeted interventions are required to improve health outcomes, and to assess progress towards the elimination of hepatitis B as a major public health threat.”

“To progress to a better place, we must first know where we are and how we got there,” says Thomas Tu, Director, Deputy Chair and Secretary of Hepatitis B Voices Australia. “REACH-B is a crucial first step in understanding the landscape of Hepatitis B care: who is best served and who is being left behind; what programs have worked and what needs improving; what we can do well and, importantly, where we need to do better. This is one way that we can hope to prevent and manage the impacts of hepatitis B affecting hundreds of thousands of people nationwide.”

ABOVE Professor Gail Matthews presenting preliminary findings from REACH-B at the Australasian Viral Hepatitis Conference in Brisbane, Queensland.

LEFT [Colourised transmission electron micrograph of hepatitis B virus particles](#). Photography: NIAID and CDC – image courtesy of CDC; colourisation by NIAID. (CC BY 2.0)

OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP Scientia Professor Gregory Dore; Dr Kerry Chant speaking at the Kirby Institute’s World Hepatitis Day event.



The number of people living with hepatitis C in Australia and new infections per year have declined by around 60 per cent since 2015, according to a 2024 report from the Kirby Institute.

“These marked reductions follow the introduction of highly curative treatments for hepatitis C in 2016. Since then, more than 100,000 Australians have received curative treatment. This, alongside existing primary prevention strategies, has produced a dramatic decline in new infections.”

Scientia Professor Gregory Dore, head of the Viral Hepatitis Clinical Research Program



Celebrating World Hepatitis Day

To mark World Hepatitis Day, the Kirby Institute ran a special seminar event on 28 July that was chaired by Steven Drew, Chief Executive Officer of Hepatitis NSW.

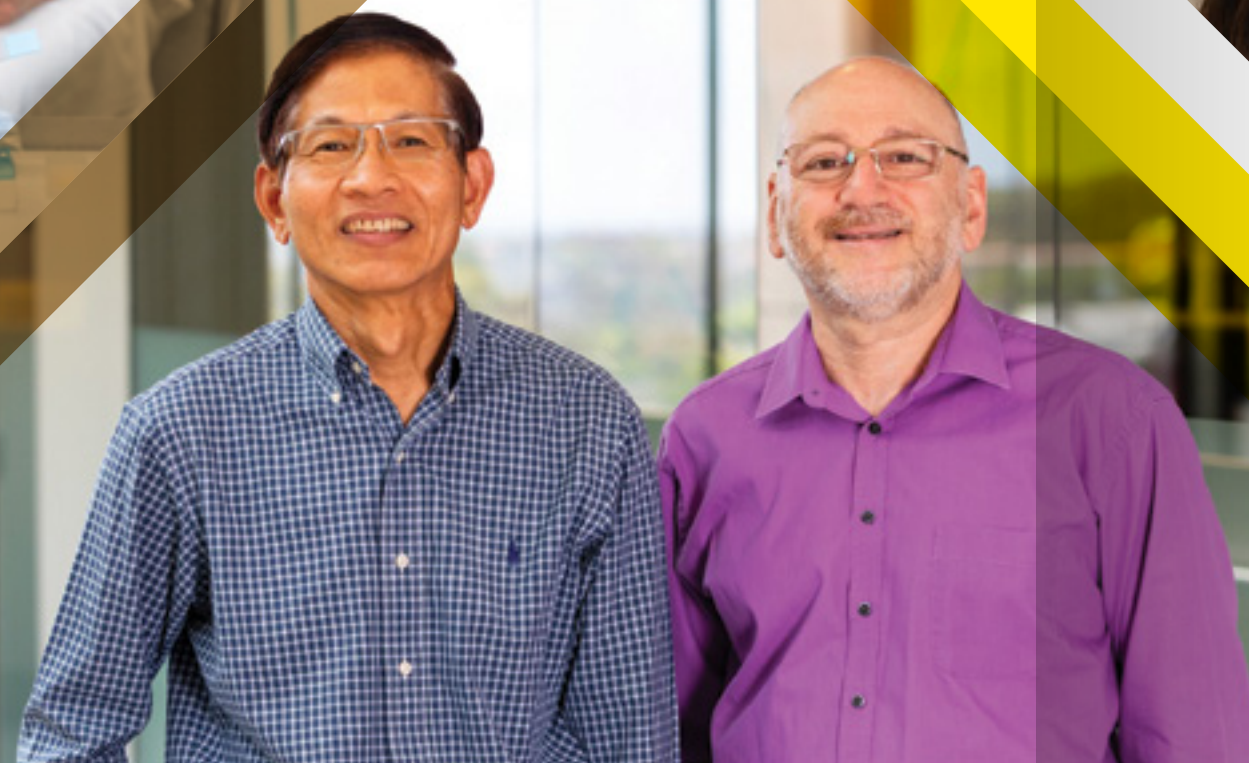
Scientia Professor Gregory Dore presented key findings from the *2nd Hepatitis C Elimination in NSW Monitoring and Evaluation Report*, and was joined by guests Collete McGrath, General Manager, Population and Preventative Health, from Justice Health NSW, a pivotal driver of hepatitis C elimination, and NSW’s Chief Health Officer, Dr Kerry Chant, who spoke about strategic directions for hepatitis C elimination in NSW.

Positive progress

- Published in 2024, the 2023 Australian Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) Survey, coordinated by the Kirby Institute, found that current hepatitis C infection declined markedly among those attending NSP services over the previous five years, and the prevalence of HIV remained very low.

Our people

Our researchers and staff are world leaders in their field and possess a wide range of skills, knowledge and experience. Together, we work towards providing solutions to current health challenges across the globe.





Powering research, together

At the heart of every piece of research at the Kirby Institute are teams of dedicated professionals working behind the scenes to make it all happen. From project managers to clinical trials coordinators, their hard work and collaboration ensure that vital medical research moves forward.

Not only do these professionals help keep things running at the Kirby Institute, they also play a key role in driving progress and innovation. Recognising the opportunity for support and knowledge-sharing among her peers, project manager Lara Dragasevich created the Project Leaders Group to connect professional staff with one another and strengthen their impact.

“The group is a resource pool to draw upon where we can share knowledge and learn skills from one another,”

she explains. “It’s also a fantastic opportunity to connect with colleagues.”

Starting with just 10 members, the group has grown rapidly to around 40, who meet monthly to exchange ideas, discuss challenges and share collective knowledge in project management, clinical trials and research operations.

The group has already tackled topics like regulatory compliance, financial planning and data governance systems.

From a small gathering to a connected network, the Project Leaders Group has become a go-to resource, helping the Kirby Institute’s professional staff share their expertise and make a lasting impact in the field of infectious disease and public health.

ABOVE Professional staff play a vital role at the Kirby Institute.

LEFT Project manager Lara Dragasevich.



5 mins with...

Phyo Pyae Nyein
PhD Student,
Therapeutic and Vaccine
Research Program

In Myanmar, I was a general physician taking care of people with HIV. There were very limited opportunities and support for academic work. In 2019, I got the opportunity to join the Cooper HIV/AIDS Research Training (CHART) program at the Kirby Institute, which enhanced my interest in HIV research. But doing a PhD at the Kirby or any other institution abroad was never on my agenda.

When the political crisis came in 2021, I decided to leave my home country. During this challenging time, I received an incredible amount of support from my Kirby friends, which made it possible for me to join the PhD program here.

I love the balance of independence and guidance I receive from my supervisors, who care about me and are always happy to help. As an international student who is completely new to Australia and its academic culture, the support from my other colleagues also means a lot to me. I think the Kirby is unique in creating such a supportive work environment.

The best part is the relaxed working environment, which gives me the space to reflect and better understand myself. As my PhD progresses, I’ve learned more about who I am and that I truly enjoy academic work. I love what I do.

The PhD process at the Kirby has helped foster and flourish my curiosity, creativity and enthusiasm in academia.



2024 in pictures



January

British businessman Lord Glendonbrook, who has supported Kirby Institute research for 10 years through The Glendonbrook Foundation and philanthropic donations, visited the Kirby Institute.

“From its earliest days, the Kirby Institute has responded to real community health needs and approached scientific research from the perspective of the equal right we all ought to have to healthcare, as well as the power of generating evidence to challenge stigma and discrimination,” he said.



March

Allegra Spender MP, the Member for Wentworth, paid a visit to the Kirby Institute to tour the lab facilities and meet with researchers.



May

The nine participants of the 2023–2024 Cooper HIV/AIDS Research Training (CHART) program graduated.



June

Project Manager Emily Phillips from the Yandamanjang Program was invited as a panellist representing Indigenous people at the Multi-stakeholder Hearing on Antimicrobial Resistance, held at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters.

February

Staff at the Kirby Institute commemorated the 46th Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.



March

We celebrated International Women’s Day with an online forum featuring a panel of women speakers committed to improving the health, wellbeing and economic empowerment of women in their communities.



May

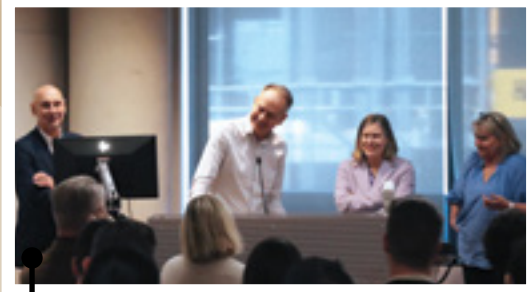
New PhD graduates Win Min Han, John Paul Caesar Delos Trinos, Brandon Le and Dhanushi Rupasinghe.



July

In celebration of First Nations peoples, culture and health research, the Kirby Institute hosted a special NAIDOC Week event. This year’s theme was ‘Keep the fire burning! Blak, loud and proud’.





July

The theme for World Hepatitis Day 2024 was 'It's time for action'. At the Kirby Institute, we held a special event to provide an overview of the achievements related to hepatitis C elimination targets in NSW and the challenges that still need to be overcome.



September

Kirby staff attended and presented at two landmark conferences at ICC Sydney: the Australasian HIV&AIDS Conference 2024 and 25th IUSTI World Congress (incorporating the Australasian Sexual and Reproductive Health Conference). Together, these conferences united over 1,200 delegates from 35 countries over five days to discuss the latest advancements in HIV and sexual and reproductive health.



October

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Program is renamed Yandamanjang First Nations Health Research Program at a special event. Photography: Maria Boyadgis.



December

Several Kirby staff attended the World AIDS Day Parliamentary breakfast in Canberra. Professor Andrew Grulich was part of the panel discussion.



October

Award-winning journalist, writer and scholar Stan Grant discussed the importance of humanity for the future of health and society at the David Cooper Lecture, an annual event held to honour our co-founder and inaugural director. Photography: Maria Boyadgis.



August

We welcomed 10 participants to the 2024–2025 Cooper HIV/AIDS Research Training (CHART) Program.



October

Dr Louise Causer gave the 2024 Brett Tindall Memorial Lecture, speaking about the decade of work that has gone into achieving equitable access for treatment and diagnoses of sexually transmissible infections in remote Australia.



December

We celebrated and commemorated staff with long-service awards for their career milestones and accomplishments at the Kirby Institute.





Kirby Institute Postgraduate Student Prize 2024

Yumi Sheehan (pictured above, right) was awarded the Kirby Institute's Postgraduate Student Prize for her paper, *A 'one-stop-shop' point-of-care hepatitis C RNA testing intervention to enhance treatment uptake in a reception prison: The PIVOT study*. It was published in the *Journal of Hepatology* in 2023.

The Kirby Institute Postgraduate Student Prize is an annual award given to the most significant first author paper by a Kirby Institute student, published in the previous calendar year in a peer-reviewed journal in the area of infectious diseases.

This primary paper from the PIVOT study demonstrated the effectiveness of a 'one-stop-shop' intervention in enhancing hepatitis C testing and treatment uptake, and reducing the time to treatment initiation among new receptions to prison, compared with standard of care. Evidence from this research has changed policy and practice, including underpinning the development of best practice recommendations in national and international guidelines and the implementation of point-of-care hepatitis C testing in prisons across all Australian states and territories. It has also contributed to securing over \$35 million in grant funding and support.

"This is a significant achievement, and I commend Yumi for her critical thinking, enthusiasm and exceptional work," said Scientia Professor Anthony Kelleher (pictured above, left), Kirby Institute Director.

In 2024...



68
postgraduate students enrolled



22
international students



15
different countries



12
PhD completions



Dr Heather McCormack (above), a Wiradjuri woman and a Scientia Research Fellow, was awarded her PhD, making her the Kirby Institute's first female First Nations PhD graduate.



Advancing research at the Kirby

Our researchers and staff bring their in-depth knowledge, skills and experience to the Kirby Institute to tackle the most pressing health challenges today. We are also dedicated to equipping the next generation of researchers with the expertise needed to address the health issues of tomorrow.

The Kirby Institute offers two postgraduate research degrees: the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and the Master of Science by Research (MRes). In 2024, the Kirby Institute had 68 postgraduate students enrolled, including 22 international students from 15 different countries, and celebrated 12 PhD completions.

"The continued success of our graduates is a reflection of the outstanding culture and excellence of our institute," says director, Scientia Professor Anthony Kelleher. "I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the 2024 PhD graduates on their remarkable achievements and valuable contributions to global health research. Their dedication and hard work are truly commendable."

Congratulations to Kate Burry, Anna Conway, Jack Freestone, David Goodman Jr, Marinjho Jonduo, Elizabeth Kpozehouen, Brandon Le, Heather McCormack, Dhanushi Rupasinghe, Olga Saweri, Syed Hassan Bin Usman Shah, Yuhuang Wu.

ABOVE David Goodman Jr, Heather McCormack, Elizabeth Kpozehouen and Anna Conway were among the 2024 graduates.
RIGHT Ellen Bowden-Reid at the UNSW 3MT Finals. Photography: Isabella Moore.

Also in 2024...

- + Research Fellow J'Belle Foster was recognised with the 2024 CRANaplus Excellence in Education and/or Research Award. This award was in recognition of her contributions to improving tuberculosis control at the Torres Strait/Papua New Guinea international border using evidence from her PhD research.
- + Ellen Bowden-Reid, who is undertaking her PhD at the Kirby Institute, won first prize in the UNSW Faculty of Medicine & Health heat for the 3-Minute Thesis (3MT) 2024 competition for her presentation, *RNA: The secret weapon against pandemic viruses*. Her PhD is being supervised by Dr Chantelle Ahlenstiel, Scientia Professor Anthony Kelleher and Dr Ernest Moles Meler. Ellen went on to place third overall in the UNSW 3MT Finals.



Awards and accolades

A look back at some of the recognition received in 2024.

- + Dr Heather McCormack became a UNSW Scientia Fellow and also achieved Highly Commended in the 2024 Charles Sturt University Alumni Awards for Research Excellence.
- + Bernard Saliba and Dr Nathanael Wells were both awarded Jack Bradley Scholarships.
- + Dr Steffen Docken and Dr Ye Zhang were awarded UNSW Medicine Early Career Academic Network's 2024 Best Publication Awards in the Public Health and Basic Science categories respectively.
- + Alexandra Carey Hoppe and Dr Skye McGregor participated in the STEMM Champions Program 2024.
- + Professor Virginia Wiseman was elected International Health Economics Association President.
- + Professor Raina MacIntyre received the Clarivate Highly Cited Researcher award and was also elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences.
- + Dr Anouschka Akerman, Millicent Balcomb, Phoebe Crammond, Andleeb Hanif, Dr Priyanka Hastak, Rebecca Henry, Jordan Stoddart, Andrey Verich and Tiana Wang contributed to receiving Silver Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF) Accreditation.
- + Drs Anouschka Akerman, Joanne Carson, Priyanka Hastak, Mohana Kunasekaran, Nathanael Wells and Alexandra Young all received 2024 Kirby Institute Emerging Investigator Awards.
- + Associate Professor Tanya Applegate was awarded the UNSW ARC Postgraduate Study Research Staff Award for the Faculty of Medicine and Health.
- + Anna Conway and Dr David Goodman Jr received the Dean's award for their PhD theses.
- + Andrey Verich placed first in the UNSW Founders Postgrad Pitch Competition.
- + Dr Elke Mitchell received an ARC Discovery Early Career Researcher Award.
- + Sarah Warzywoda and Curtis Chan from the HIV Epidemiology and Prevention Program both received ASHM Early Career Awards at the Australasian HIV&AIDS Conference 2024.
- + Dr Win Min Han won an IAS/ANRS Lange/van Tongeren Prize for Young Investigators in the Clinical Science category at AIDS 2024, the 25th International AIDS Conference.
- + Dr Rehana Hewavisenti received first prize in the Early Mid-Career Researcher Rapid-Fire Presentation Session at the 4th Cancer and Ideas Immunology Forum, the Early Career Oral Presentation Award at the International Papillomavirus Society Conference 2024 and the UNSW Medicine and Health 2024 Early Career Academic Network (ECAN) Conference award.

Academic promotions

- + **Professor:** Rowena Bull, Susana Vaz Nery
- + **Associate Professor:** Tanya Applegate, Richard Gray, Chaturaka Rodrigo
- + **Emeritus Professor:** Andrew Lloyd
- + **Senior Lecturer:** Adam Bartlett, Evan Cunningham, Mo Hammoud, Alison Marshall
- + **Lecturer:** Steffen Docken, Eva Stadler



Professor Kathy Petoumenos (left) was promoted to the head of the Biostatistics and Databases Program.



Yuan Zhang (pictured, left), Dr Chantelle Ahlenstiel (pictured, right), Scientia Professor Anthony Kelleher and Dr Scott Ledger from the Immunovirology and Pathogenesis program won second place in UNSW Faculty of Medicine & Health's BYO Innovation Challenge on 6 August for their presentation on silent COVID. The challenge saw an array of faculty members and affiliates pitching their health innovation ideas at an evening showcase at the Michael Crouch Innovation Centre, with topics ranging from infectious disease and cancer to osteoarthritis and mental health.

Long-service achievements

At the Kirby Institute, we are proud to celebrate our long-serving team members and their incredible dedication to our mission.

- + **10 years:** Marianne Byrne, Dr Denton Callander, Danica Echevarria, Dr Bridget Haire, Associate Professor Behzad Hajarizadah, Dr Mo Hammoud, Dr Lise Lafferty, Dr Marianne Martinello and Erin Ogilvie
- + **15 years:** Dr Chantelle Ahlenstiel, Associate Professor Tanya Applegate, Megan Clewett, Dr Awachana Jiamsakul and Kirsty Smith
- + **20 years:** Barbara Yeung
- + **25 years:** Dr Dianne Carey and Kathy Petoumenos
- + **30 years:** Professor Matthew Law

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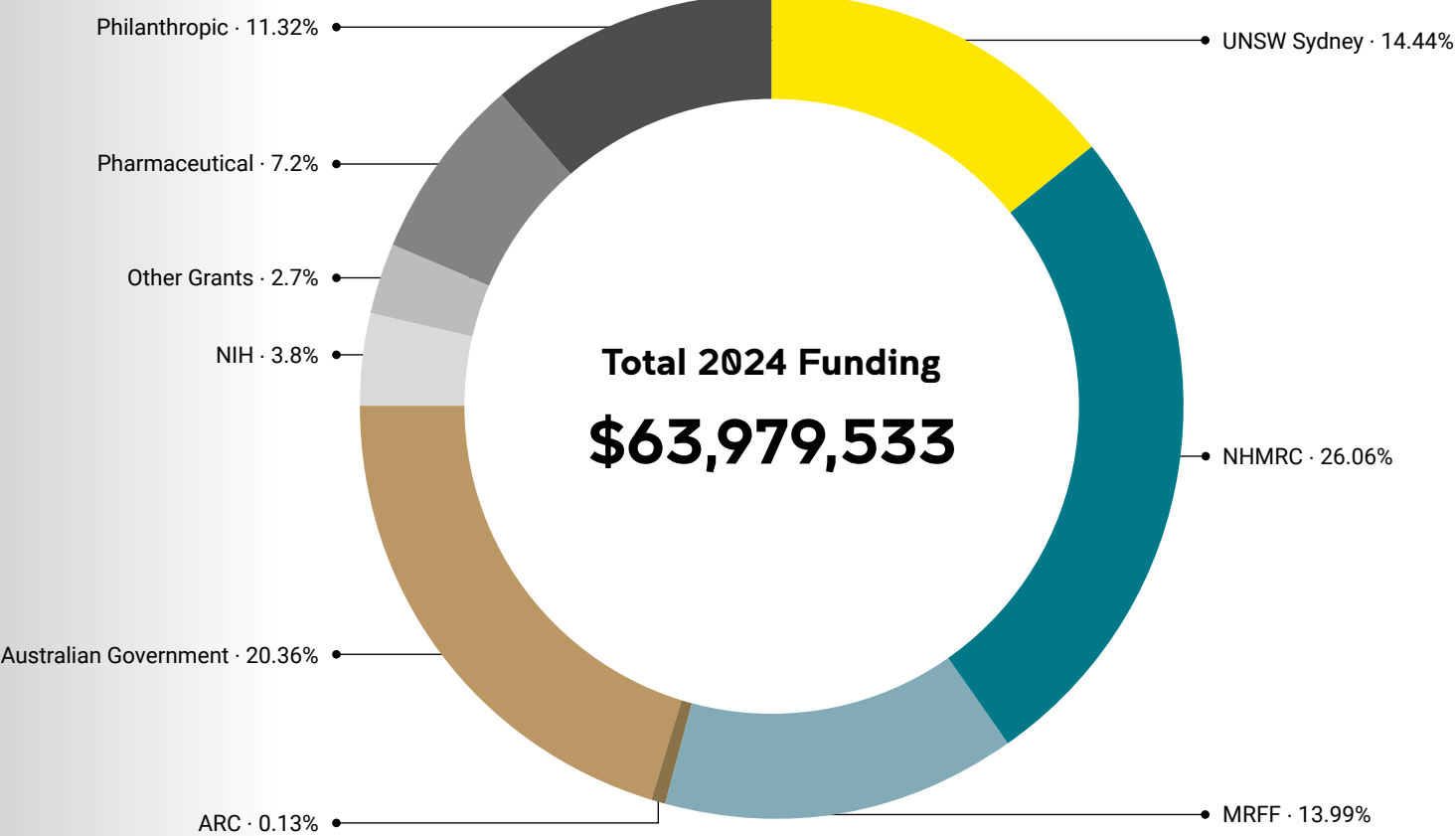
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Eilis Duggan
Lisa Patane
Vicky Sawatt
UNSW Medicine & Health

 kirby.unsw.edu.au

 info@kirby.unsw.edu.au


 +61 2 9385 0900

 Kirby Institute
Bidjigal Country
Level 6, Wallace Wurth Building
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