

mRNA Series Two / Lecture One

GUEST SPEAKERS

Professor Marco Herold

Chief Executive Officer, Olivia Newton John Cancer Research Institute



Prof Marco Herold is the Chief Executive Officer of the Olivia Newton John Cancer Research Institute (ONJCRI) and an active researcher. Prof Herold's research uses advanced genome wide CRISPR screening, including gene activation and base editing in vitro and in vivo, to identify critical gene targets required for the development and sustained growth of cancer cells.

Prof Herold completed his PhD and postdoctoral studies at the University of Würzburg, Germany, training in cell death research and mouse genetics. During this time, he worked with the German Pharma Company Taconic Artemis developing methods to establish novel pre-clinical models of disease.

In 2008, Prof Herold moved to Australia to join WEHI as the Laboratory Head in the Blood Cells and Blood Cancer Division and Head of the Melbourne Genome Editing Centre (MAGEC).

Since joining ONJCRI in 2023, Prof Herold is focused on fostering collaborations both within ONJCRI and with external entities while capitalising on existing strengths, assets, and successes of ONJCRI.

Dr Vi Wickramasinghe

Head, RNA Biology and Cancer Laboratory, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre



Dr Vi Wickramasinghe is an internationally recognised leader in RNA biology, specifically in RNA export and how it is altered in cancer. These findings have launched a new field in RNA Biology with significant translational potential.

In recognition of the impact of his research, Nature Reviews Cancer and Nature Reviews Molecular Cell Biology have commissioned him to write reviews. He was recently awarded the inaugural Moderna Australia Fellowship.

He has established, co-leads and manages several programs of collaborative research with senior researchers, both within and outside of Peter Mac that encompass both fundamental medical research and industry collaborations.

He hopes to use his laboratory's ground-breaking research in RNA transport to develop the first in class nuclear mRNA targeting therapies to treat cancer.

Dr Christopher Wraight

CEO and Director, RAGE Biotech



Christopher has broad experience in early-stage pharmaceutical R&D and commercialisation in both private equity funded and listed companies.

He was Research Director and a Technology Founder at Antisense Therapeutics Ltd (ASX:ANP), a satellite company of RNA therapeutics leader Ionis Pharmaceuticals, and has guided RNA-targeting drugs from research through to the clinic and commercial exit.

In previous CEO roles he navigated a novel therapeutic entity (NTE) nasal spray product from concept through Phase 1b clinical trials and exit in 5 years (Otifex), and built a team and company structure that produced the most advanced direct Myc inhibitor for cancer (MycRx).

Christopher has a PhD in Biochemistry and an MBA specialising in Technology Management. He was a Guest Scientist and Humboldt Fellow at the German Cancer Research Centre in Heidelberg, and in 2008 he received the Advance BioBusiness Award for leadership in the Australian Life Sciences sector.

FACILITATOR

Associate Professor Misty Jenkins AO

Laboratory Head, Head Research Strategy, Brain Cancer Centre, WEHI



Misty Jenkins is a NHMRC fellow and laboratory head in the Immunology Division at WEHI. Misty leads the immunotherapy program within the Brain Cancer Centre and is dedicated to discovering novel immunotherapy targets for high grade gliomas in adults and children. Her research focusses on the development of novel chimeric antigen receptor T cells for brain cancer. Her group also uses cutting edge two-photon microscopy combined with mouse models of brain cancer to investigate the tumour microenvironment and uncover unique biology of brain tumours.

Misty has a PhD in Immunology with Laureate Peter Doherty and Steve Turner, from The University of Melbourne, followed by postdoctoral positions at The Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, with Gillian Griffiths, and the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, with Joe Trapani.

She was awarded an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 2023 for distinguished service to medical science in Immunology, the support of women in STEM, and to the Indigenous community.