



# QSRF

Queensland  
Schizophrenia  
Research  
Foundation

# NEWSLETTER

Supporting local research into schizophrenia and bipolar disorder

May 2008

Volume 1, Issue 1

## Special points of interest:

- **MINDCARE** partnership
- **First research grant made**
- **Schizophrenia and cancer**

## Governor's afternoon tea

There was added excitement at this successful function as it was just the day after the announcement that Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce will be the next Governor General of Australia.

About 30 people who had expressed interest in the QSRF attended the afternoon tea on 14 April 2008. It was an informal event with the Governor personally greeting all guests.

Prof Stan Catts and Ms Susan de Waard spoke briefly followed by a general discussion. The Governor was well informed in the area of mental health. It was pleasing to see that a number of people felt comfortable enough to share personal family experiences of mental illness with the other guests.

Our thanks to Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce and the staff at Government House.



Her Excellency Mrs Quentin Bryce and Prof Stan Catts

## Web site Sponsors

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## Launch of clearthinking campaign



QSRF Spokesperson  
Ms Susan de Waard

At the Governor's afternoon tea QSRF Spokesperson Ms Susan de Waard launched the state-wide *clearthinking* early detection campaign for young people.

The *clearthinking* campaign is supported by the Foundation's web site ([www.clearthinking.com.au](http://www.clearthinking.com.au)) and state-wide distribution of the *clearthinking* early recognition posters for display in general practice waiting rooms across Queensland.

QSRF thanks Farmout's Georgia Limmer for the stunning poster and website design work including the *clearthinking* logo shown below.



# MINDCARE raises funds for research



Supporting life changing research was the theme for the Gala Cocktail Party hosted by MINDCARE on 16 November 2007. The Fortitude Valley venue was generously provided by Austral Motors.

Ms Susan Cameron, who has led MINDCARE for many years introduced speakers.

Ms Sara Kendall, incoming President of MINDCARE, spoke of her family's experience with mental illness which led to her involvement in the organisation.

MINDCARE chose to support the research of a doctoral student who aims to evaluate a novel test of the way people process visual images. This objective test may help diagnose depressive disorder in young people before it is possible using clinical interview. The test may be ideal for young people who have never been diagnosed and who have difficulty recognising the early symptoms of depression.

Prof Stan Catts explained the urgent need for early detection. We know treatments work much better in the early stages of mental disorder, yet for most, treatment is delayed for years.

## **MINDCARE-QSRF partnership: United we stand**

This partnership exemplifies what NGOs can achieve when they work together. More than \$20,000 was raised for research in one evening.

Our thanks to Ms Susan Cameron and to the Kendall Family for their support and the use of the Austral Motors show room.

*"Of the 20% of young people who suffer a major depressive episode, nearly half will go on to chronic psychiatric disability as adults"*

## Finding new ways to detect depressive disorder earlier in young people

As a result of the tremendous MINDCARE fundraising effort, a grant has been made to Ms Bonita Sheppard, a doctoral student at the School of Biomedical Sciences, University of Queensland. Bonita is carrying out an evaluation of perceptual rivalry timing as a diagnostic marker for depressive disorder in young people.

The results of this research may lead to development of a screening test for early detection of depressive disorder, or a method to assist with identifying patients who are most likely to respond to antidepressant medication and with monitoring treatment response.

We are looking forward to giving you an update on this research in a future newsletter.



Ms Bonita Sheppard speaking at the MINDCARE Gala Cocktail Party

# Kicking a goal for schizophrenia research

On Saturday 17 November 2007 the Toowong Private Rovers (Toowong Private Hospital) took on the RBWH, Prince Charles and the Caboolture MHS at the Bulimba Eagles Soccer Club

Everyone got into the spirit of the event. Some were a little more enthusiastic than others and there were a number of battered and bruised bodies at morning's end.



Prof Stan Catts gave a short address on QSRF and its aims, then joined the footballers in a sausage sizzle to replenish some of the energy used during the games.

The support of the Toowong Private Hospital, the players and the funds raised were greatly appreciated by the Foundation. A particular vote of thanks is owed to Mr Joe Finn for organising the event.



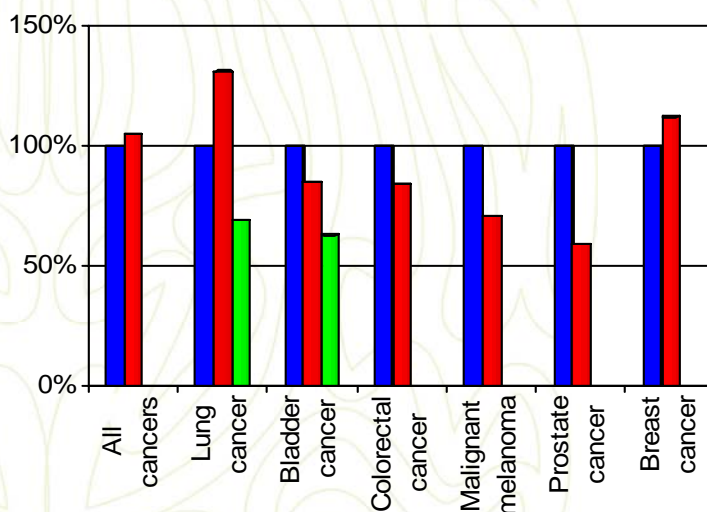
## Why don't people with schizophrenia get cancer more often?

A recent analysis combining the results of national studies showed that cancer rates in people with schizophrenia are not increased in line with their many lifestyle risk factors (*Acta Psychiatr Scand*, 117, 323-336, 2008). Rates of colorectal cancer, malignant melanoma and prostate cancer, all unrelated to smoking, were decreased. The number of patients who smoke heavily is more than double the number in the general population. Following mathematical adjustment for differences in smoking rates, lung cancer was decreased by 30% in people with schizophrenia.

Local researcher and lead author, Dr Vibeke Catts said "cellular mechanisms that protect against cancer are also involved in brain development and neuron repair".

The cancer findings may offer an important clue to guide neuroscience studies into schizophrenia.

■ General population ■ People with schizophrenia ■ Smoking adjusted



### Early cancer detection matters

Against the general trend, breast cancer was significantly increased in women with schizophrenia - highlighting the importance of regular mammography. Also, people with schizophrenia who get cancer are more likely to receive delayed medical care. GP preventative checks are essential. Pap smears in women and PSA blood tests in men should be routine in older people. Colonoscopy is also important in older age groups or for those with a family history of this type of cancer.

## Meet the trustees

From left to right in photo:

Prof Stan Catts, School of Medicine, University of Queensland and Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital.

Prof Alex Blaszczynski, School of Psychology, University of Sydney and Director of the University of Sydney Gambling Research Unit.

Dr Aaron Frost, Clinical Psychologist, Psychology Consultants, Morningside.



### CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

The QSRF is planning a gourmet food and wine evening to be held during Mental Health Week in October 2008.

As the Foundation has limited resources, we are seeking the assistance of volunteers to help organize this special event. Please email us on [admin@qsr.com.au](mailto:admin@qsr.com.au) if you are interested and would like further information

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## STOP PRESS!

### Dietary supplement treats schizophrenia

An article in *The Australian* newspaper on 12 May 2008 reported on research which has been done by Australian, US and Swiss researchers. They found "the supplement - N-acetyl cysteine (NAC) - reduces some of the distressing symptoms of the mental disorder not helped by existing medication."

"According to Prof Michael Berk, NAC relieves negative symptoms by helping to produce glutathione, a natural antioxidant that helps to prevent so-called free radicals from damaging body cells

and DNA. The brain is particularly sensitive to such damage."

During the trial "NAC had a 'significant' reduction in 'negative' symptoms such as loss of motivation, drive and initiative and social withdrawal."

Prof Catts suggested that greater brain cell sensitivity to oxidative stress in schizophrenia may explain a degree of resistance to cancer (see story on previous page) and the response to NAC.

**Please support local research into schizophrenia and bipolar disorder by mailing this form to Queensland Schizophrenia Research Foundation, PO Box 951, Spring Hill Qld 4004**

Name: .....

Address: .....

Cheque enclosed made out to Queensland Schizophrenia Research Foundation \$ .....

I/we would be interested in talking with you about the type of research we wish our donation to support

Email: [admin@qsr.com.au](mailto:admin@qsr.com.au)

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