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## Chair's Report



Dear A+ EMCR's

I hope all EMCRs in the Alfred precinct and their families are in good health. We are in an un-usual time of COVID-19 crisis and many of us are working from home. I would like to thanks all EMCRs who are coping with said situation and also handling kids, carer and other family responsibilities.

The A+ EMCR committee is still working and hoping to bring multiple activities for the rest of the year. This year EMCR conference will go online and our sub-committee is putting the dates and agenda together. We are also hit by COVID-19 crisis in financial matters and some of our programs will change in terms of monetary wise but the programmes will still be happening to appreciate EMCR researchers work in the precinct. I would like to acknowledge all the sub-committee members for their hard work in their respective programmes. I will continue to provide support to all sub-committees and this year the A+ EMCR executive will concentrate upon increasing virtual networking by conducting multiple activities. We are looking for new members in range of A+ EMCR sub-committees. Finally, I would like to say stay home and stay healthy. I hope we will go back to normal working situation soon. We welcome any suggestions for new initiatives that would help EMCRs in building their professional career.

Here is the report published by EMCR Forum looking at the impacts of COVID-19 for EMCRs:

<https://www.science.org.au/files/userfiles/support/documents/covid19-emcr-impact-report.pdf>

Dr Moeen Riaz (Monash SPPM)  
2020 A+ EMCR Committee Chair

## Welcome New A+ EMCR Committee Members

We would like to welcome four EMCRs joining the A+ EMCR Committee.



**Ms Paige Gray**

*Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre*

I'm a first year PhD student researching the cognitive, psychosocial and biological profiles of women suffering from Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder. I am based at Monash Alfred Psychiatry research centre and have been involved in their work for the past two years. I am passionate about research into mental health and am an advocate for continuous exploration of this area. In my spare time I enjoy reading books, cooking, knitting and pilates.



**Dr Elizabeth Thomas**

*Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre (MAPrc), Department of Psychiatry*

I currently work within the Women's Mental Health division at MAPrc. I completed my PhD in 2019 looking at the influence of the glutamatergic system on cognition across the broader schizophrenia spectrum. As a post-doc, I have now shifted focus to look at cognition in women with Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS). In both these areas of cognitive research, a key area of interest has been using eye-tracking to gain a better understanding of cognitive processes in mental illness. I am also involved in numerous programs to better engage with the community, including the CSIRO STEM Professionals in Schools program where I am able to help educate the next generation of scientists.



**Dr Miles Andrews**

*Central Clinical School,  
Alfred Health Department of Medical Oncology*

I'm a postdoctoral fellow at the CCS where my main research focus is to understand the mechanisms underlying effective immune control of cancer. I also treat cancer patients at the Alfred Hospital and work on a range of translational projects involving genomics, immunology, the cancer microbiome, and pre-clinical models.



**Ms Dinuli Nilaweera**

*School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine*

I am a PhD Candidate, interested in understanding to what extent chronic and severe psychological stress (including posttraumatic stress disorder) are risk factors for adverse events in later-life, such as dementia and mortality. My research involves secondary data analyses conducted on multiple large cohorts (including ASPREE), which has driven my interest in Biostatistics. I enjoy teaching undergraduate students, and am involved in teaching Biostatistics at Monash University.



**[Dr Meaghan Clough](#)**

*Department of Neurosciences, Central Clinical School, Monash University*

I am a research fellow working in the Ocular Motor Research Laboratory within the Department of Neuroscience. My research entails an investigation of the ocular motor system as a means of developing an understanding of neurocognitive processes fundamental to normal human behaviour, and how these processes become dysfunctional as a consequence of disease. My work combines a range of research methodologies (ocular motor, neuropsychological and neuroimaging), with a primary focus on establishing the utility of ocular motor measures in a range of neurological diseases (Multiple sclerosis, concussion, Parkinson's disease, visual snow), with the ultimate goal of developing sensitive biomarker(s) for use in clinical screening/monitoring and clinical trials.



**Dr Aowen Zhuang**

*Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute, Molecular Metabolism and Ageing/Lipid Metabolism and Cardiometabolic Diseases*

I currently work in the Lipid Metabolism and Cardiometabolic Diseases laboratory and the Molecular Metabolism and Ageing laboratory at the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute. My research focus is currently on novel molecular mechanisms involved in cardio-metabolic diseases. I am the current Chair of the Baker Institute ECS Committee, an active member of the Baker Institute Reconciliation Action Plan Committee and the Alfred Research Alliance EMCR Committee (and Mentoring sub-committee). I am very passionate in the mentoring and training of young researchers.

## **Recruitment for New A+ EMCR Committee Members**

The Early-Mid Career Researchers (EMCR) Committee currently operates at the A+ site and encompass EMCRs from Monash, Baker IDI, Burnet and the Alfred. Our primary purpose is to promote scientific exchange and oversee the professional development of EMCRs (1-10 years post-doc) and post-graduate students on the Alfred Research Alliance campus.

The A+ EMCR Committee is looking for dedicated, energetic and enthusiastic EMCRs (Research Assistants, PhD students, and 1-10 years Postdocs) to join our growing and dynamic committee in 2020. This committee will be responsible for the ongoing management and organisation of our EMCR-related activities at A+ (encompassing Monash, Baker IDI, Burnet, and Alfred), including the following:

- A+ EMCR Conference (to be held in 2020)

- A+ EMCR Retreat (to be held in 2021)
- A+ EMCR Mentoring Program
- A+ EMCR Collaborative Seed Grants
- A+ EMCR Best Paper Awards
- A+ EMCR Newsletter / Website (including Facebook/Twitter)
- Professional Development Seminars

## 2020 Best Paper Awards - Applications Now Open

In 2020, the A+ EMCR Committee will award six papers the A+ EMCR Best Paper Award to honour the outstanding research that is being done and published by early and midcareer researchers within A+. Due to the current climate, this year there will be no monetary prize associated with these awards, however we still encourage you to apply as it is a great opportunity to expand your CV. In addition, this year we are introducing a "People's Choice" award that will receive an honorary title of A+ EMCR People's Choice. As such we encourage all EMCR to submit your best paper.

- 2020 A+ EMCR Biomedical Research Best Paper Award (3 awards)
- 2020 A+ EMCR Public Health/Clinical Research Best Paper Award (3 awards)
- 2020 A+ People's Choice Award (1 award)

Any publication published in 2019 (including Epub online publication) will be eligible for the 2020 A+ EMCR Best Paper Award, and the EMCR must be listed as the first author, or last author on the nominated research paper. A publication cannot be submitted for the Award more than once.

For further details on eligibility and application form, please see <https://www.monash.edu/medicine/ccs/research/emcr/awards>

## Let's Collaborate: Pitch your research idea!

2020 was not supposed to be like this!

We are sorry to announce that the 2020 Alfred ResearchAlliance Collaborative Seed Grants are not being awarded due to COVID-19. However, our committee is trying to find ways to adapt and maintain the momentum of collaborative research within our campus in these very difficult times.

For 2020, the EMCR Collaborative Seed Grant Committee will be conducting a session titled, "Let's Collaborate: Pitch your research idea!" during the EMCR Conference to be held on 29th October 2020. The idea behind this session is to facilitate contact between the

EMCRs between the institutes as well as foster lasting collaborations across the Alliance. Applicants will be invited to pitch their research idea enabling early and mid-career researchers to communicate with one another regarding what they have and what they need.

Expressions of Interest are now open, please click on this link to find out more <https://forms.gle/PdLwdb7uMcCfbQ1u6!>

## Conference/Retreat Updates

This year's A+ EMCR Symposium is expected to proceed on Thursday 29th October, with the purpose of providing EMCRs and PhD students an opportunity to network and share their research. The EMCR Symposium will be held in late October, in an online format. The program will be similar to that of previous years, including EMCR talks, keynote speakers, panel discussions. Depending on interest, there is also the possibility to include workshops/focus groups to the program. We welcome you to email us with any suggestions for topics of interest. Abstract submissions and registrations will open later this month, and we encourage all EMCRs and PhD students to attend.

## Mentorship Updates

The A+ EMCR Mentoring Program is currently in progress. In April 2020, the committee successfully paired 28 mentees with mentors. Mentees are encouraged to maintain contact throughout the year to best utilise this relationship in order to assist with professional development and career progression. In the current climate, we would also encourage mentees to leverage their mentors' expertise on how to navigate this difficult time, to ensure the effect on their career trajectory is minimised. Mentees and mentors will be contacted by the committee later this year to provide feedback on the program.

## Share Your Top Tips for Working & Living in Isolation with your Alliance Colleagues

We're almost half way through Stage 4 restrictions - but with three weeks of lockdown still to go, the Alfred Research Alliance is asking you for your 'Top ISO Tips' to share with your colleagues across the precinct. Email Robyn ([robyn.frampton@baker.edu.au](mailto:robyn.frampton@baker.edu.au)) your top tip for surviving (and thriving) during ISO and you could feature in the next Alliance eNews, and win a \$50 Coles-Myer Gift Card!



Alfred Research Alliance EMCR Committee  
Edited by Associate Professor Eric Chow

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