

Introduction

The Sylvia and Charles Viertel Charitable Foundation was established under Charles Viertel's Will in 1992. The Will provided that the Trustees of the Foundation (Table 1) may at their absolute discretion select and make grants to charitable organisations and for charitable purposes anywhere in Australia. The Will documented the wish of Mr Viertel that the policy of the Trustees would be to disregard those charities having high administrative expenses and to benefit such organisations, institutions or individuals as may be involved in medical research into diseases and the alleviation of hardship of the aged and infirm.

Charles Viertel (1902–1992) was one of eleven children of a German father and English mother. The family were poor Charles was a life long high achiever. He graduated dux of the Brisbane Central Technical High School and Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Queensland. Sylvia Viertel (1904–1980) married Charles when they were both in their 40s. She was a home maker and keen gardener. Viertel believed in helping people who helped themselves. He gave generously but did not seek public recognition. In leaving a \$60 million charitable bequest to the Foundation at the full discretion of his Trustees, stipulating that his Trustees disregard those charities with high administrative expenses, he thus laid the framework for a Foundation predicated on achieving results and helping those who help themselves.

The Medical Advisory Board (MAB) was set up in 1995 under the Chairmanship of Professor John Chalmers (Table 2). From the outset, it was the aim of the MAB that the Viertel Charitable Foundation should make a difference to medical research in Australia. Members were concerned about the (world wide) decline in clinical investigation and decided to support new clinical investigators, in their first career

clinical positions, with untied setting up grants. The Board also recognised the need for career research fellowships which bridged the gap between post-doctoral studies and career research positions. Accordingly the flagship award of the Sylvia and Charles Viertel Charitable Foundation, the Senior Medical Research Fellowships, were established.

These five-year Viertel Senior Medical Research Fellowships (currently valued at \$165,000 per annum) provide both salary and project grant support for outstanding Australian medical researchers. A maximum of two Fellowships is awarded each year, one of which will normally go to a medical graduate. Only Australian nationals or permanent residents are eligible (Table 3).

Because the Fellowships are funded for 5 years, it took 5 years to reach a steady state of disbursement, and the MAB recommended to the Trustees that the additional funds available in the first years be used for grants for major equipment. Accordingly capital equipment grants were awarded from 1995–1997 inclusive. These are shown in Table 4. The grants were contingent on matching institutional funding. \$3.2 million was awarded, the bulk in the first year. These grants together with the matching funds, was a very major contribution to the national research infrastructure.

The Establishment Grants for Viertel Clinical Investigators also commenced in 1995. ‘Viertel Clinical Investigator’ awards (currently \$55,000) are given once only, to medical graduates or graduates of other clinical disciplines who have completed both their clinical and research training and are commencing their first definitive career position. Applicants should be actively engaged in clinical work and pursuing health and medical research in a teaching hospital, or an academic general practice setting.

The applications are judged on the quality of the applicant's track record, career achievements, and a brief research proposal. The awards, as seen from Table 5, have very much achieved their aim of assisting outstanding people to establish their clinical research careers.

What difference has the Viertel Foundation made to medical research in Australia?

The Viertel Senior Medical Research Fellowships are the Foundation's flagship award. A number of Fellows have gone on already to senior academic and research positions and several have attracted NHMRC Program Grants. This scheme has assumed even greater national importance with the withdrawal by the Wellcome Trust of its Fellowships in Australia, in favour of support for Eastern Europe. In a short space of time the Viertel awards have, become highly competitive, sought after, and prestigious.

The equipment grants, made over 3 years, were put in place at a time when stringencies in the NHMRC system meant that funding for equipment was severely restrained. Total NHMRC equipment funding over the period 1995–97 was only approximately \$6.7 million, so that the \$2.45 million from the Foundation was a very significant contribution to the total national medical research infrastructure. The majority of the grants went to Victoria (18), followed by NSW (10), Queensland (8), two each to South Australia and Western Australia, and one to the Northern Territory.

The Clinical Investigator scheme is unique and has supported people who are now heading research institutes or in clinical chairs, as well as working in clinical and academic departments all around the country. The intention is that untied funds will

assist newly appointed clinical researchers to establish their independent research programs and to assist them in attracting competitive peer-reviewed funds. This scheme has been particularly successful.

Any assessment of medical research funding in Australia, compared with other countries, concludes that government funding is roughly comparable with that of many competitor countries but that Australian philanthropic funding both corporate and private lags way behind. The Viertel Foundation is an example of Australian philanthropy at its best, an example others should follow. The Board and the Trustees are delighted with the outcomes of the first decade. The Sylvia and Charles Viertel Foundation looks forward to playing an increasingly important role in medical research in Australia, through its ongoing commitment to investment in young researchers.

Table 1 Sylvia and Charles Viertel Charitable Foundation Trustees

| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Mr George Curphey (Chair) | 1992– |
| ANZ Executors & Trustee Company Limited | 1992– |
| (Various staff have been representatives) | |
| Mr Brian Wishart Gibbon | 1992– deceased 8 November 2000 |
| Mr James Kennedy AO, CBE, FCA | 2001–2002 |
| Mr Rex Freudenberg | 2001 - |
| Mr William Anthony Lee | 2002 – 2005 |
| Justice Debra Mullins | 2005 - |

Table 2 Medical Advisory Board Members

| Name | State | Dates |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Professor Henry Burger | Vic | 1998–2002 |
| Professor Donald Cameron | Q | 1996– Chair 2004– |
| Professor John Chalmers (Chair) | SA, NSW | 1996–2000 |
| Professor John Coghlan | Vic | 1996– |
| Professor Ian Constable | WA | 1996–2000 |
| Dr Helen Creasey | NSW | 1996–2000 |
| Associate Professor Prue Hart | SA | 1997– |
| Dr Tom Hurley | Vic | 1996–1997 |
| Professor Peter Leedman | WA | 2002– |
| Dr Tony Morton | Q | 1996 |
| Professor Susan Pond | NSW | 2002– |
| Professor Lawrie Powell | Q | 1996–2002 |
| Professor Judith Whitworth | NSW, ACT | 1996– 2003 Chair 2000–2003 |

Table 3 Viertel Senior Medical Research Fellowships

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|---|--|
| 1995 | Dr Trevor Kilpatrick | The Walter & Eliza Hall Institute, Vic | The role of the receptor tyrosine kinase gene, Tyro-4, in motor neuron development |
| | Dr Pankaj Sah | John Curtin School of Medical Research, Australian National University, ACT | Synaptic plasticity in the amygdala |
| 1996 | Dr Graeme Kay | Queensland Institute of Medical Research | The Xist gene as a functional component of the X inactivation centre |
| 1997 | Dr Joanne Shaw | Princess Alexandra Hospital, Q | The characterisation of the genetic basis of maturity onset diabetes of the young and of non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus |
| | Dr Melissa Little | Centre for Molecular & Cellular Biology, Q | Modulation of WT1 activity by protein-protein and protein-RNA interactions |
| 1998 | Dr Eugene Maraskovsky | Ludwig Institute, Austin Hospital, Vic | Identification of functionally distinct dendritic cell subsets generated invitro and invivo |
| | Dr Lorraine Robb | The Walter & Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, Vic | Specification of Haemopoietic development in the early murine embryo |
| 1999 | Dr Alister Ward | Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, Vic & Deakin University | Studies of myeloid leukaemogenesis in the zebrafish |
| | Dr David Huang | The Walter & Eliza Hall Institute | Biological and biochemical |

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| | | of Medical Research, Vic | mechanisms regulating programmed cell death |
| 2000 | Dr Dianne Fatkin | Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, NSW | Molecular genetic studies of inherited cardiomyopathies |
| | Dr Kum Kum Khanna | Queensland Institute of Medical Research | To define the role of BRCA1 in DNA-damage response |
| 2001 | Dr Tracy Bryan | Children's Medical Research Institute, NSW | Telomerase components in tetrahymena and human |
| | Dr Mark Hulett | John Curtin School of Medical Research, Australian National University, ACT | Regulators of cell invasion and angiogenesis |
| 2002 | Dr Thomas Preiss | Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, NSW | Translational control of gene expression and the choice between cell death and proliferation |
| | Dr Philippe Bouillet | Walter & Eliza Institute of Medical Research, Vic | Role of BH3-only proteins in autoimmune and degenerative diseases |
| 2003 | Dr Jacqueline Matthews | University of Sydney | Regulatory Proteins in Development and Disease |
| 2004 | Dr Miles Davenport | University of New South Wales | Understanding HIV vaccination |

Table 4 Capital Equipment Grants

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------|--|-----------|
| 1995 | Professor Tony Basten | Centenary Institute of Cancer Medicine and Cell Biology, NSW | \$67,500 |
| | Professor Gary Jennings | The Baker Medical Research Institute, Vic | \$81,661 |
| | Associate Professor Ann Kelso | The Queensland Institute for Medical Research | \$87,500 |
| | Dr Ian Clark-Lewis | The Hansen Centre for Cancer Research, SA | \$100,000 |
| | Professor GW Tregear | The Howard Florey Institute of Experimental Physiology and Medicine, Vic | \$100,000 |
| | Professor Andrew Boyd | Royal Brisbane Hospital | \$100,000 |
| | Professor Robert Graham | The Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, NSW | \$100,000 |
| | Dr Graham Galloway | University of Queensland | \$100,000 |
| | Dr Jennifer Stow | University of Queensland | \$100,000 |
| | Professor Alan Trounson | Monash University, Vic | \$99,907 |
| | Dr JH Tochon-Danguy | The Austin Hospital, Vic | \$28,624 |
| | Professor Sir Gustav Nossal | The Walter & Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, Vic | \$40,251 |
| | Professor TJ Martin | St Vincents Institute of Medical Research, Vic | \$25,075 |
| | Professor Ian Gibbins | Flinders University of SA | \$100,000 |
| 1996 | Professor Bevyn Jarrott | Monash University, Vic | \$40,000 |
| | Dr A Strasser | Walter & Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, Vic | \$100,000 |
| | Professor Ian FC McKenzie | The Austin Research Institute, Vic | \$67,000 |

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| Professor Allan Saul | Queensland Institute of Medical Research | \$100,000 |
| Professor Ruth Bishop | Royal Children's Hospital Research Foundation, Vic | \$40,000 |
| Professor SP Klinken | Royal Perth Hospital | \$35,075 |
| Professor IH Frazer | University of Queensland | \$75,425 |
| Dr Brian J Morris, NSW | University of Sydney | \$54,621 |
| Associate Professor P Kroon | University of Queensland | \$82,935 |
| Associate Professor Peter R Schofield | Garvan Institute of Medical Research, NSW | \$39,354 |
| Dr G Paxinos | University of New South Wales | \$25,000 |
| Dr MM Shell | University of Wollongong, NSW | \$50,000 |
| 1997 Dr AL Gundlach | Austin & Repatriation Medical Centre, Vic | \$50,000 |
| Professor J Funder | Baker Medical Research Institute, Vic | \$50,000 |
| Professor J Shine | Garvan Institute of Medical Research, NSW | \$50,000 |
| Professor F Mendelsohn | Howard Florey Institute of Experimental Physiology & Medicine, Vic | \$50,000 |
| Dr R Pearson | Peter McCallum Cancer Institute, Vic | \$50,000 |
| Professor A Saul | Queensland Institute of Medical Research | \$50,000 |
| Professor T Cunningham | Westmead Institute of Health Research, NSW | \$50,000 |
| Associate Professor J Bateman | Royal Children's Hospital | \$45,000 |

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| | Research Foundation, Vic | |
| Professor PJ Robinson | Children's Medical Research Institute, NSW | \$40,000 |
| Dr K Skiprakash | Menzies School of Health Research, NT | \$37,500 |
| Dr MW Parker | St Vincent's Institute of Medical Research, Vic | \$35,000 |
| Dr IL McAllister | Lions Eye Institute, WA | \$30,000 |
| Professor EM McLachlan | Prince of Wales Medical Research, NSW | \$30,000 |
| Dr H Dahl | Murdoch Institute for Research into Birth Defects, Vic | \$22,500 |
| Dr RA Hughes | University of Melbourne | \$22,500 |
| | TOTAL | \$2,452,428 |

Table 5 Viertel Clinical Investigators

| | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 1995 | Dr Anderson | |
| | Dr L Burrell | University of Melbourne |
| | Dr D Celermajer | University of Sydney |
| | Dr M Handle | University of NSW |
| | Dr S Jackson | Monash University |
| | Dr Kay | |
| | Dr H Krum | Vic |
| | Dr Loughnan | |
| | Dr M Naughton | Vic |
| | Dr Powell | |
| | Dr Thomas | |
| | Dr Ward | |
| 1996 | Dr Jonathan Carter | King George Vth Hospital |
| | Dr Andrew Michael Cotterill | Mater Children's Hospital |
| | Dr Richard Donnelly | University of Sydney |
| | Dr Anthony John O'Sullivan | University of NSW |
| | Dr Paul Michael Waring | The Flinders University of SA |
| 1997 | Dr Paul Thomas | University of NSW |
| | Dr Jonathan Fawcett | University of Queensland |
| | Dr Steven Wesselingh | Flinders Medical Centre |
| | Dr Ian Chapman | Department of Medicine |
| | Dr Euan Wallace | Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology |
| | Dr Jonathan Kalman | The Royal Melbourne Hospital |
| 1998 | Dr Anne Chang | Mater Misericordiae Hospitals, Q |

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|-------------|------------------------|---|
| | Dr Neil Della | Flinders University, SA |
| | Dr Kwun Fong | The Prince Charles Hospital, Q |
| | Dr Michael McKay | University of Melbourne |
| | Dr Michael Grimm | University of New South Wales |
| | Dr Francesco Ierino | University of Melbourne |
| | Dr Christopher Levi | John Hunter Hospital, Newcastle |
| | Dr Adrienne Morey | St Vincent's Hospital, NSW |
| 1999 | Dr John Rasko | Centenary Institute of Cancer Medicine & Cell Biology, NSW |
| | Dr Luk Rombauts | Monash University, Victoria |
| | Dr Annemarie Hennessey | Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, NSW |
| | Dr Andrew J Nicol | University of Queensland |
| | Dr Sam Lim | Concord Repatriation General Hospital, NSW |
| | Dr Jonathan Morris | Royal North Shore Hospital, NSW |
| 2000 | Dr Simon Koblar | The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, SA |
| | Dr Marcus Stoodley | Prince of Wales Hospital, NSW |
| | Dr Michael Stowasser | Princess Alexandra Hospital, Q |
| | Dr Mark Adams | Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, NSW |
| | Dr Simone Strasser | Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, NSW |
| | Dr David Torpy | University of Queensland |
| | Dr Mathew Cook | The Canberra Hospital |
| | Dr Paul Sparks | The Royal Melbourne Hospital |
| 2001 | Dr Terence O'Brien | University of Melbourne |
| | Dr Carolyn Sue | Westmead Hospital, NSW |
| | Dr John Erlich | University of New South Wales |

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|-------------|-------------------------|---|
| | Dr Susan Walker | Mercy Hospital for Women, Vic |
| | Dr Roy Kimble | University of Queensland |
| | Dr David Prior | University of Melbourne |
| 2002 | Dr John Beltrame | University of Adelaide |
| | Dr Jamie Craig | Flinders University, SA |
| | Dr Matthew Kiernan | Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute, NSW |
| | Dr Harshal Nandurkar | St Vincent's Hospital |
| | Dr Janet McCrohon | The St George Hospital, NSW |
| | Dr Jonathon Golledge | James Cook University, Q |
| | Dr Andrew Day | University of New South Wales |
| | Dr Bu Beng Yeap | University of Western Australia |
| | Dr Lucy Bowyer | University of New South Wales |
| 2003 | Dr Christopher Rayner | Royal Adelaide Hospital, University of Adelaide |
| | Dr Niall Tebbutt | Austin Hospital, Ludwig Institute |
| | Dr Cheryl Jones | The Children' Hospital at Westmead, University of Sydney |
| | Dr Graham Radford-Smith | Royal Brisbane Hospital |
| | Dr David Walker | Royal Brisbane Hospital |
| 2004 | Dr Derek Chew | Flinders Medical Centre |
| | Dr Harry Lowe | Concord Repatriation General Hospital / University of New South Wales |
| | Dr Mark Parsons | John Hunter Hospital / University of Newcastle |
| | Dr Monique Ryan | University of Sydney |
| | Dr Tien Wong | University of Melbourne |

(Tables updated by ANZ Trustees - 2 March 2005)