



Gary Richardson OAM MBBS FRACP

Group Director, Cabrini Research

Neil Beaglehall Endowed Chair: Director of Medical Oncology Research

Professor of Medicine, Monash University

Tell us about yourself and how you came to be in your current role(s)?

I currently hold the Neil Beaglehall Endowed Chair in Medical Oncology Research. I am the Group Director of the Cabrini Research, Director of Oncology Clinics Victoria, a member of the Cabrini Australia Executive and a Professor of Medicine at Monash University. I previously held the position of Director, Department of Medical Oncology & Clinical Haematology at Monash Medical Centre. I am a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. I trained at St Vincent's Hospital, the Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute and the National Cancer Institute in the United States.

I am a past-chairman of the Medical Oncology Group of Australia and immediate past-president of the Private Cancer Physicians of Australia. I am a member of ASCO's International Affairs Committee and the MOGA- PBAC Working Party. I am a past executive member of the Victorian Co-operative Oncology Group. I am a member of the American Society of Clinical Oncology; the American Association of Cancer Research; the American Association for the Advancement of Science; The European Society of Medical Oncology, the Gynaecological Oncology Group; and the International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer.

I initiated and developed clinical research in haematology and oncology at Cabrini Health and am involved in the design, development and

conduct of clinical trials. I am Director of Clinical Research in Medical Oncology and Haematology, Group Director of Cabrini Research, and personally act as principal investigator in many clinical studies in lung and gynaecological malignancy, as well as development of novel compounds for the treatment of cancer. I established the Oncology clinical research program at Cabrini, the Cabrini Family Cancer Clinic, the Oncology Service at Cabrini Brighton. I am past Chairman of Foundation 49, a Men's Health Organisation sponsored by Andrology Australia, and is part of the Federal Government advisory board that developed the National Male Health Policy and the Victorian Men's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

What is your connection to SMICS?

I am showing my age, but I have been involved with SMICS since its inception. That was initially as the Director of Medical Oncology at Cabrini and now as the Group Director of Cabrini Research. The vision of "Improving patient experiences and outcomes by connecting cancer care and driving best practice" is integral to my job. SMICS has been instrumental in championing multidisciplinary care, allowing us to work as part of a team, exchanging knowledge and expertise, all for the betterment of patient care. I am proud to be a small part of the organisation.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your role(s)?

There are multiple rewarding aspects, but probably the most rewarding is being able to mentor the best and brightest young people to further my profession. It is incredibly exciting to see how they embrace the ever changing landscape of cancer care and improve it. I always hope that my trainees will far exceed my achievements.

What is it about your work that makes you want to get out of bed each morning?

Doing something that I truly enjoy and knowing that it makes a difference to patients' lives. One of the really exciting things about my job is the number of advances that are occurring in cancer treatment. The advent of pharmacogenomics and immunotherapy are unbelievably interesting, and I have always loved the science in my profession. Oncology is a constantly evolving field with ongoing research and new discoveries. As an oncologist, you have the opportunity to contribute to medical knowledge and advancements. You may be involved in clinical trials, research studies, or collaborations that lead to better treatment options, improved outcomes, and ultimately, advancements in cancer care.

What does a typical day at work look like for you?

I wear two hats, one as the Group Director of Cabrini Research which includes being a member of the Cabrini Executive, and the other is as an academic cancer clinician. Both roles require an early start, and most days I usually try to fit in 30 minutes of exercise before heading off to work. The director role is largely administrative, with many meetings scheduled on Wednesday and Thursday, as well as out of hours. Monday, Tuesday and Friday mornings are clinic days, with a mix of patients on clinical trials and standard treatments. I could not juggle all of the demands without excellent support staff, who basically run my life (this includes my wife).

How do you manage work / life balance?

It is a difficult concept, and my approach is to "work hard and play hard." Meeting the demands of family life, including satisfying seven children, meant that I had to be able to partition times just for them. I have a great ability for mindfulness, and am able to switch from one role to another and be in the moment. I have always had the rule not to work on weekends, which creates increased working efficiency and allows time for pursuits outside of work. This includes time with friends and family, following the mighty Hawks, horse racing, and the endless pursuit for the perfect bottle of wine.

Are there any patient success stories that you can share?

The greatest areas of success I have witnessed as a medical oncologist relate to the introduction of both immunotherapy and pharmacogenomics. The former is the use of drugs to deregulate the immune system to fight the cancer. These drugs have revolutionised the treatment of cancer. Cabrini participated in the early studies in metastatic melanoma, a uniformly fatal disease, and I will never forget chatting to a patient called Ian, who was one of the first treated on the study, 10 years after he was cured by the trial drug. The advent of genomics has created a raft of new targets for novel drugs. One of my patients with a rare tumour was found to have a mutation that responded to a trial drug. He is alive seven years after being treated, which was unheard of even 20 years ago.