

"It is a great honour to receive the RT Hall Prize from the CSANZ and humbling to join the ranks of previous winners who have made outstanding contributions to cardiology."

By Prof. Peter Kistler

My academic career began as a cardiology registrar at the Royal Melbourne Hospital in 2000 where the electrophysiology and pacing programs were under the leadership of Prof Jitu Vohra, A/Prof Harry Mond and a young exciting Jonathan Kalman who had just returned from San Francisco. I was offered a pacing fellowship under Harry Mond, a wonderful, caring teacher who introduced me to academic work.

From 2002 to 2005 I completed my PhD under Prof Kalman at a time when much of electrophysiology was novel and Jon's publications would regularly appear in Circulation and JACC. The highlights of the PhD period were developing a real passion for the ECG and electrophysiology as not only an academic challenge but one that has a major impact in patients' lives. We defined Focal Atrial Tachycardia and the signature P waves which could localize the anatomic locations of responsible sites from the ECG.

This was recognized with publications in JACC and the Heart Rhythm Fellows Clinical Research award in 2006 and the Pwave algorithm was developed into an App. I was fortunate to compete for the Ralph Reader Basic Science award and the Heart Rhythm Society Young investigator in 2005.

With the support of my wife and our 6 week old son, Bruno, I went to London to work under Prof Richard Schilling at a time when CT image integration into 3D mapping systems had just arrived.

PETER KISTLER
2020
R T HALL
PRIZE WINNER

I gained immense clinical and academic experience in complex arrhythmias and established international collaborations which have been imperative in clinical research.

On return to Australia in 2006, I was appointed by Prof Tony Dart and Dr Archer Broughton to head electrophysiology at the Alfred Hospital and an equivalent position at the Baker Heart Research Institute with the support of the inaugural CSANZ/14th World Congress of Cardiology research investigatorship.

Over the next 15 years a strong collaborative program with Prof Kalman at RMH has developed with supervision of 17 PhD, many international EP research fellows and more than 200 publications. The dedication, sacrifice, and hard work each PhD student has shown is remarkable and particularly given this is often a time when families are beginning and financial support during a PhD is minimal.

The Cardiology Department at the Alfred Hospital under Prof David Kaye is a cohesive, collegial work environment and provides a strong foundation for research with internationally renowned academics across all subspecialties.



Recent highlights include the CAMERA MRI multicenter randomised study published in JACC in 2017 which demonstrated significant recovery of ventricular function in patients with AF and heart failure who underwent catheter ablation. This has changed national and international guidelines with a frameshift to a goal of sinus rhythm rather than rate control in patients with AF and heart failure. More recently we have defined the relationship between alcohol and atrial fibrillation culminating in the first randomised study to determine the impact of alcohol abstinence on atrial fibrillation.

This non funded multicentre study was published in the New England Journal of Medicine on January 2nd 2020. This was presented at the late breaking clinical trials at the American College of Cardiology meeting in 2019 and the winner of the Ralph Reader Award at CSANZ in 2019.

The research attracted world-wide media attention with a “sobering” review on alcohol and AF featured on the front page of the Age and National News networks. Lifestyle risk factor modification is now at the forefront of AF management.

I have been most fortunate to be supported by colleagues at The Alfred Hospital, Baker Research Institute, The Royal Melbourne Hospital and the Universities of Melbourne and Monash together with research funding from the NHMRC and National Heart Foundation. I would particularly like to acknowledge the support of my mother, Carol and my wife, A/Prof Laura Scardamaglia, without whom my academic career would not have been possible.