



DAVID COOPER

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIP



ST VINCENT'S
HEALTH NETWORK
SYDNEY

Inspired by You

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Forward

Scientia Professor David Albert Cooper AC FRACP FRCP FAA FAHMS (19 April 1949 – 18 March 2018) was an Australian Immunologist and HIV Researcher at St Vincent's Hospital and the Kirby Institute at the University of New South Wales (UNSW).

David's life was dedicated to the prevention, treatment and cure of HIV and other infectious diseases. These diseases disproportionately affect the world's most disadvantaged communities, and David firmly advocated health as a fundamental human right in all of his endeavours. His leadership as a clinician and researcher was extraordinary.

Professor Cooper had a profound impact on the St Vincent's Campus. His clinical career spanned three decades at St Vincent's.

Returning to Sydney from the US, David was the driving force in establishing both the Immunology B Outpatients Clinic (IBAC) and the State Reference Laboratory for evaluation of new AIDS diagnostic technologies.

The lab soon became pivotal because of its capacity to isolate HIV, perform antibody tests to diagnose infection and more recently undertake viral load and detailed analysis of HIV sequences and identify HIV drug-resistant variants. By the late 1980's the Laboratory was screening more than 1000 samples a week for the presence of HIV antibodies and to this day has diagnosed the majority of cases of HIV infection in Australia.

In 1984 David became the Director of the newly established St Vincent's Unit for HIV Medicine, which saw six dedicated beds established within Ward 17 South of the Cahill Building. At this time David was leading the way in both the clinical and research environment in this new fight against HIV. But there was another major battlefield that had quickly emerged, that of social stigma where David suddenly found himself alongside the Sisters of Charity to play a critical role in advocating on behalf of the HIV community as fear and ignorance took hold both within the general public and on the Hospital Campus.

In the St Vincent's Executive Medical Board Meeting of October 1984 it was recorded that there was *"much discussion about the detrimental effect the fear of this disease has and will have on both staff recruitment and patients' acceptance of hospitalisation at St Vincent's. Concern were also expressed about the number of beds that these patients may take up in the hospital, when the maximum effects of this disease are felt."*

In this atmosphere of stigmatisation and fear of the unknown, 1984 marked a seminal moment, a true test of the Sister's Mission of serving those in need. And the emphatic response of the Sisters and the likes of David Cooper, Ron Penny and their colleagues was that of unequivocal love.

Indeed the moral strength and conviction exhibited by the Sisters and David in standing up to this fear and confronting it head-on back in 1984, will go down as a watershed moment for St Vincent's, and one of the proudest flashpoints in our 160-year history.

Professor Cooper became the inaugural Director at the establishment, in 1986, of the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research that ultimately became the Kirby Institute.. David was an internationally renowned leader, initiating ground-breaking, collaborative infectious disease research that has saved countless lives in Australia, and globally.

David's record of clinical and academic achievement is unparalleled. In the mid-1980s, his research led to the first description of the seroconversion illness which accompanies initial HIV infection in many people. He then proceeded to take a leading role in most of the key trials that ultimately led to the optimal use of life-saving combination treatments that are now widely available to people with HIV all over the world. In 2003, he was made Officer in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AO) for "service to medicine as a clinician, researcher and leading contributor in the field of HIV/AIDS research and to the development of new treatment approaches." David was working right up to the time of his illness, running large-scale international clinical trials to improve HIV treatment, building research capacity in Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia and Myanmar, and leading the trial of pre-exposure prophylaxis to eliminate HIV transmission in New South Wales

In recognition of his life's work, David Cooper was posthumously appointed Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) in the 2018 Queen's Birthday Honours for "eminent service to medicine, particularly in the area of HIV/AIDS research, as a clinician, scientist and administrator, to the development of treatment therapies, and to health programs in South East Asia and the Pacific.

David continued to see patients at St Vincent's and in 2016 he retired as the Director of the St Vincent's Applied Medical Research Centre and head of clinical trials. David's leadership in building research and clinical trials capacity at St Vincent's is immeasurable, he mentored and taught countless students, registrars and health workers, he was a friend and confidant to hundreds of patients, and always their advocate and voice.

Call for applications

St Vincent's Centre for Applied Medical Research invites eligible individuals to apply for funding aimed at supporting early career fellowship or scholarship to complete a post-graduate qualification (PhD) in research involving blood borne virus or related infectious disease or clinical immunology research. Researchers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds or Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin are encouraged to apply.

Submission of applications

- Applications must use the application form developed for this program.
- Prior to commencing an application, please note that the list below summarises the main information required:
- A statement outlining how the proposed research aligns with St Vincent's Hospital's research priorities
- A research proposal outlining quality, significance and innovation of the proposed research
- The names of three potential research collaborators at St Vincent's or partner university in the area of your research proposal. Additional names may be included in the application
- Contact details of three academic referees the applicant wishes to nominate
- A declaration of previous or current funding granted as well as a statement of other funding requests currently under consideration.
- A detailed curriculum vitae detailing research outputs and income.

David Cooper Fellowship

Purpose and objectives

In recognition of Professor David Cooper's passion for clinical trials and the translation from the bench to the bedside the hospital is proud to name in his honour of this 'Professor David Cooper Scholarship' for a PhD student or fellow to work in the field of HIV, viral hepatitis or related infectious diseases and/or immunology

The David Cooper Fellowship/Scholarship is also offered in part to support the St Vincent's Health Network Research Strategic Plan 2018-2023 commitment to boost support for early career researchers on the St Vincent's Sydney campus.

The Fellowship grant is intended to support a medical or health professional in final stages of advanced specialist training to complete a PhD by research in a relevant clinical stream.

The Scholarship grant is intended to support a suitably qualified undergraduate from a relevant health discipline to undertake a PhD by research in a relevant discipline eg. biomedical science, nursing or allied health.

The objectives of the fellowship or scholarship is to

- Build a strong, vibrant and highly skilled research workforce
- Embed a culture of research and innovation in clinical service streams whereby research activity drives best practice and clinical care.
- Attract new, high calibre researchers to the health and medical research community at St Vincent's
- Retain existing talented early career researchers
- Help bridging the gap between research and policy and practice

Details of Funding

Successful fellow will receive between \$90,000-\$120,000 per annum for up to three (3) years towards salary costs (including on-costs of up to 20%)

Awardees receive a \$50,000 scholarship package for three (3) years, comprising a \$40,000 per annum tax-free stipend and a travel and development support package of up to \$10,000 per annum.

Both categories (fellowship and scholarship) receive a further \$5,000 towards research consumables and infrastructure.

Funding conditions and exclusions

Fellowship or scholarship funding must not be expended on capital works, general maintenance costs, organisational infrastructure or overheads, telephone or communications, basic office equipment, rent and the costs of utilities.

Equipment that is purchased as part of the grant funds will remain the property of St Vincent's Hospital Sydney

St Vincent's Centre for Applied Medical Research (AMR) will be responsible for managing any fellowship or scholarship fund.

Funding provided under this scheme shall be used for the purposes other than for which it was awarded, or is unspent at the conclusion of the term, will be recovered by AMR and may be recycled for future program awards.

Eligibility criteria

Candidate

- An Australian citizen or permanent resident (evidence to be provided if required) committed to residing in a reasonable distance from St Vincent's Hospital Darlinghurst campus.
- In the case of research fellows, if the candidate is employed at St Vincent's Hospital that the applicant can satisfy the selection committee that they can maintain a level of

clinical contact within their substantive positions whilst concurrently devoting ample time to the fellowship so that the objectives of grant will be achieved.

- Have the support of a supervisor or supervisory team from within a research active unit of St Vincent's Hospital or partner organisation committed to providing the necessary infrastructure to support and oversee the project, ensuring research project feasibility, and progress to publication outputs.
- Supervised by an established senior clinical academic or team with established clinical and research trackrecord.
- Ability to demonstrate capacity to undertake a translational research project evidenced by; a strong understanding of research ethics and governance, sound track record in dissemination of research findings by publication in peer reviewed literature, delivering presentations at conferences and seminars and or track record in obtaining research grant funding.
- Ability to ensure that all relevant approvals eg. human research ethics, animal ethics, gene technology approvals have been secured and remain in place for the duration of the funding period.
- Enrolled in or enrolling in a research higher degree eg. PhD at an affiliated university.

Selection criteria

- Quality of proposed research project and alignment with research areas in the fields of clinical immunology, blood borne infections and related diseases
- Academic and relevant professional qualifications
- Track-record of the of the applicant relative to research experience and opportunity
- Skills and experience directly related to the topic area(s) and methodology of the research proposal
- Project feasibility and the likelihood that project will successfully translate into a sustainable research agenda that may lead to service improvement and/or better patient outcomes.
- High level communications skills and the capacity for the applicant to develop into a leadership role as a clinician researcher or professional within the integrated healthcare and research campus.

Selection process

- STEP 1: Initial eligibility appraisal against eligibility criteria
- STEP 2: Scoring against selection criteria
- STEP 3: Interview
- STEP 4: Independent review by experts in area of research proposed
- STEP 5: Allocation of funding
- STEP 6: Funding agreement

Reporting requirements

- The successful candidate will be obliged to a schedule of reporting including any mandatory PhD progress assessments prescribed by the enrolled university
- The applicant will also be required to provide an annual progress report
- Annual financial reports of expenditure
- Presentation of project progress at least annually at AMR seminar series equivalent forum eg. Grand Rounds

Closing date for applications: 20 September 2019

Submit applications to : philip.cunningham@svha.org.au