



# Australia

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## Musings from the Chair

As I glance out my window the sun is shining brightly in a cloudless blue sky; a beautiful day but in many parts of Australia there have been storms and destructive flooding. We have always accepted that the weather can change dramatically from one day to the next but recently most of us have been violently shaken by seismic bouts of uncertainty – lockdown, mask wearing, QR codes, vaccination certificates.

Staying healthy has been the overriding aim for most of humankind for almost all of the last two years since we first heard of Covid-19 but for those with PKD, staying healthy has always been a lifelong wish.

Watching the 3-part television series “*Michael Mosley's Health Revolution for Australia*” recently, I thought what wonderful news it is that Type-2 Diabetes (T2D), a scourge of modern society and a huge cost to the health system, is reversible, with selective changes of lifestyle.

As we know there is valuable PKD research going on into ways to preserve kidney function to delay the need for dialysis or transplant; last month we learned that drinking relatively large quantities (2-2.5L) of water does not harm polycystic kidneys, in most cases. Wouldn't it be terrific if this had proved to be such a beneficial lifestyle change? Unfortunately, there was no evidence that drinking a larger volume of water reverses cyst growth. On the other hand, maintaining healthy weight through a good diet with reduced dietary salt intake and exercise is helpful.

The conundrum is that today people for whom kidney failure is inevitable, such as many with PKD would do virtually anything to protect their kidneys while we see ever-increasing numbers of our fellow community members not maintaining healthy weight through good diet and exercise and thus developing T2D. How can we, the PKD community, warn those people not to go down the path; even if there is the potential to reverse it, it's not worth it.

The good news: Changes to the Medicare Benefits Schedule since 1st November now provide funding for Pre-implantation Genetic Testing for those with ADPKD – an option in family planning. Again, this year PKD Australia held informative webinars and virtual meetings with more of the same planned for 2022; Our gratitude goes to the community for their amazing response to the call to fund an Early Career Research grant, for which we are about to invite applications. There are also plans to offer a grant to attract a postgraduate researcher to undertake PKD research. As is obvious our wish is to fund as much leading-edge research as possible to further increase the knowledge about the key aspects of PKD and to do it as soon as practicable.

Several clinical trials about to start recruitment in Australia and now that we have such high Covid-19 vaccination uptake hopefully the researchers can get back to their laboratories to resume the search for the elusive cure for PKD. Our thanks go to these selfless health professionals who helped Australia weather the coronavirus pandemic who not only looked after their patients with kidney disease but also worked in Covid wards and helped at vaccination hubs.

I want to thank the PKD Australia (PKDA) leadership group, particularly Judi Cornell ([knowledge@pkdaustralia.org](mailto:knowledge@pkdaustralia.org)) who works feverishly in the background; the Scientific Advisory Board; our ambassadors; our local heroes; our pro-bono service providers; the donors who help to fund the grants and the PKD Australia community who inspire us to try even harder to solve the mystery that is Polycystic Kidney Disease.

After four years we said goodbye to Dr Charmaine Green who has returned to a full-time career as an embryologist and have welcomed Carolyn Cass who will apply her training as a journalist and as a nutritionist to the role of Manager of PKD Australia.

If workplace giving is a possibility for you, please consider directing it to PKDA. We don't want researchers to have to look at other diseases because they cannot get ongoing funding for PKD research.

If this letter raises any concerns or stimulates any ideas, please send feedback to: [manager@pkdaustralia.org](mailto:manager@pkdaustralia.org).

Do stay healthy, stay safe and I wish everyone a joyful festive season and a "normal" 2022.

Robert Gardos  
- Chair