

# Ophthalmic Research Institute of Australia Update

## Funding eye research: A risk worth taking?



The ORIA funds a wide range of ophthalmic research from artificial intelligence, genomics, stem cells, public health to clinical studies. We work closely with RANZCO to provide value to our members who are all RANZCO Fellows. But is supporting ophthalmic research worth the risk?

In 2020, the ORIA provided \$428,822.87 for nine impressive grant projects. Researchers are now reporting the results of the grants, and many have exceeded our expectations of their achievements. ORIA pilot funding has advanced knowledge and will improve patient outcomes. But it can take time to see the real benefits from the ORIA grant scheme. For instance, we have recently started a new grant—the ORIA Priming Grant. The Priming Grant has been established to encourage applications from RANZCO Fellows and ORIA members who are in the early stages of their clinical research career. To be eligible for a Priming Grant, the first named principal investigator (i.e. CIA) must be

within the first five years of obtaining their RANZCO Fellowship or higher degree (after taking into consideration career disruption) and a member of the ORIA. The ORIA Board believe a change to the grant scheme is always a risk, but supporting RANZCO Fellows to start a career in research is a risk worth taking.

The Perth Eye Foundation, RANZCO NSW Branch and the Australian and New Zealand Society of Retinal Specialists (ANZSRS) have supported the ORIA this year. We are grateful that their support allows us to take risks on funding new research from RANZCO Fellows.

In 2019, the ORIA impact report found a funding leverage of 10 times for the grants from 2009; and ORIA funding led to success in nine NHMRC grant schemes. This year, we will again be looking at the impact of ORIA funding and its impact in the RANZCO community and beyond. For the ORIA, funding ophthalmic research is definitely a risk worth taking.

**ORIA research funding and Australian ophthalmology publications**

