



MEDIA RELEASE

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Lungitude Foundation gets creative 'virtually' during lockdown

Move to virtual connects more patients & supporters across Australia, bringing more awareness and support of vital lung transplant research

FRIDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2021; MELBOURNE: As Melbourne unlocked over the long weekend, the Lungitude Foundation reflected on how restrictions strengthened its network across Australia with a focus on going 'virtual'. This also helped protect and support lung transplant patients, who are amongst the most vulnerable in our society during a pandemic due to their suppressed immunity.

"Prior to the lockdowns we held key events like our **Annual Lung Transplant Research Presentation** and **Fun Run** fundraisers as face-to-face events only," commented **Gordon Jenkins** Chair of Lungitude Foundation and husband of a double lung transplant recipient. "As an organisation we became stronger with the move to virtual. Lung disease that results in the need for a transplant can affect anyone in Australia – and by going virtual we've built a stronger community; protected our vulnerable patients and supporters; shared important COVID health information and raised more awareness for vital research."

To support the needs of their community during the COVID pandemic, the Lungitude Foundation launched online [COVID resources](#) for patients and supporters, and an [online Peer-to-Peer Support Network](#) which has been vital for connecting people and supporting mental health. Many patients have been in lockdown with even further self-imposed restrictions, relying on family and friends to deliver groceries, pharmaceuticals and basic needs, with this additional isolation taking a huge toll.

Lungitude
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The [Annual Lung Transplant Research Presentation](#) was held virtually in October, discussing the *Past, Present and Future of Lung Transplantation*, enabling attendees to join in from across Australia. During the event, the Lungitude Foundation announced their outstanding commitment to three years of funding for critical projects that aim to improve lung transplant survival rates and outcomes through:

1. Using non-conventional t cells for antiviral therapies
2. Harnessing donor immune cells to prevent transplantation rejection
3. Donor-recipient matching to improve transplantation outcomes.

This research will in part be supported by events such as the **Lungitude Virtual Challenge** launched as an alternative to prior in-person fun run events. Organisers were blown away by the amazing participation of supporters who fundraised within their local area, including Laura whose 'Lung Legends' came together to support her as she waits for a life-saving lung transplant.

However, more funding is still required from corporate, philanthropic, State and Federal Governments and other support channels to achieve Lungitude's ongoing vision to support world-class Australian researchers and establish The Centre for Transplant Excellence. It is critical that the increased annual growth in the number of transplants is matched by an equally increased support system (health and community) in post-transplant care so recipients can live a healthy and active lifestyle. Every additional transplant does place greater demand and pressure on hospital health services.

The global COVID pandemic highlights how healthy people can suddenly be impacted with respiratory issues. Funding for research, such as the projects being supported by Lungitude Foundation, is critical. It also showcases how a community can come together to support research and create a positive impact for transplants patients.

Margaret Catlin, a double lung transplant recipient since 2020, knows the impact of the research after benefitting from improved donor recipient matching when her lungs were selected: *"The match is so perfect that I am back to my old self doing every and anything I want," Margaret said, "I truly feel 20 years younger nothing is stopping me, and I feel fantastic. This research will improve the matching of not only lung transplants but other organ transplants in time."*

Prof Glen Westall, a Consultant Respiratory Physician at The Alfred's Lung Transplant Service also expressed gratitude for the ongoing support: *"The funding provided from Lungitude enables The Alfred's Lung Transplant Service to continue to be a world leader in Lung Transplant research, and additionally improve our patients' quality of life and survival rates even further."*

Gordon Jenkins, Chair of Lungitude Foundation commented: *"Now that we've seen the power of the virtual community, we won't go back. We're getting a better understanding of the challenges faced by lung transplant recipients who live further away from the four major centres offering lung transplant care in Australia. During treatment they may spend a lot of time isolated from their families with their lives disrupted – and improving post-transplant care for them, along with all other patients, can be addressed through our Centre for Transplant Excellence initiative."*

~ Ends ~

Annual Lung Transplant Research Day – 7 October 2021

Experts presented on the **Past, Present and Future of Lung Transplantation** sharing the highlights of the translational research Lungitude Foundation supports. Experts included Dr Lucy Sullivan, Laboratory Manager of the South Australian Transplantation and Immunogenetics Service, Dr Jaideep Vazirani, Respiratory Medicine and Sleep Medicine Physician, Prof Greg Snell, Medical Head of the Lung Transplant Service at the Alfred Hospital and a Professor in the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences, Monash University, and Prof Glen Westall, Consultant Respiratory Lung Transplant Physician and Head of Paediatric Lung Transplantation at The Alfred and can be watched on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/XyC7WB4ORsw>

Lungitude Virtual Challenge – 9 to 17 October 2021

The Lungitude Community chose their challenge and ran, walked, hopped, skipped, or jumped 3km, 5km, 10km or more wherever they were based. For further information <https://lungitude.grassrootz.com/the-lungitude-virtual-challenge-2021>

About Lungitude Foundation

The Lungitude Foundation is a registered Australian charity focused on funding and facilitating world-class translational research, advocating for lung transplant excellence, building a strong community of support, and educating key audiences. The foundation advocates for a dedicated Centre for Transplant Excellence and raises money for vital research. More information can be found here: www.lungitude.com.au

Key facts about lung transplants

- The average life expectancy for an Australian lung transplant recipient is only 7 years
- Up to 50% of lung transplants develop chronic rejection (CLAD) within the first five years
- The youngest lung transplant recipient is 5 years old and oldest is 73 years old

The world-class team at The Alfred's Lung Transplantation Program, with the support of Lungitude, has been able to:

- Claim a world-leading post five-year survival of 74%
- Become the fifth largest lung transplant program in the world
- Average 9 lung transplants per month
- Undertake 1700 lung transplants since the program began

Key facts about lungs

- Anyone can get lung disease and severe cases may result in the need for a lung transplant
- 70% of waste is eliminated through breathing making healthy lungs vital for good health
- The average person breathes in around 11,000 litres of air everyday
- The pandemic has seen a rise in lung transplants globally in patients with severe cases of COVID-19