

# Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship Fund

## 2024 Financial Year Fund Report

The Rats of Tobruk Association's (ROTA) commitment to the care of future generations of Australian children, through the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) Neuroscience Fellowship, enables vitally important research and care for neurology patients and their families.

In 2010, The Rats of Tobruk presented a cheque for \$1.5 million to the RCH Foundation, generously donated from the sale of Rats of Tobruk House in 2007. With this gift began the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship Fund, providing specialised training for up and coming neurologists and changing children's health both in Australia and around the world. To further honour the Rats' legacy of wanting to make a positive difference to the lives of sick children all over the world, the Cockatoo Ward, which provides comprehensive care to patients with neurological conditions, was affectionately named the 'Rats of Tobruk Ward'. Now in its fifteenth year, the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship has an inspirational track record of success and achievement, and is incredibly valued among the RCH community.

The following report provides an update on the financial status of the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship Fund.

## Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship - Fund status

ROTA's support is instrumental in ensuring our exceptional medical professionals in the Neurology Department have the resources necessary to provide unparalleled care to children in need.

We are happy to report that 100% of the inaugural \$1.5M gift made in 2010 is retained by the RCH Foundation as a perpetual endowment. The funds held in the endowment are invested and managed so that interest can be directed both to funding appointment of the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellow each year, and reinvested to maintain the endowment's value.

I am pleased to inform you that for FY2024 The Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship Fund will receive a total interest rate of 9.56% for the year to 30 June 2024 (3% Capital / 6.56% Operating). This impact will be instrumental to the Fellowship and for this we are most grateful.

To ensure this Endowment can fully support the Fellowship, and continues to do so, the RCH Foundation has approved an injection of capital funds to take the opening balance of the Endowment to \$2,396,732 for 1 July 2023. This will then provide Capital account interest of \$70,117, plus Operating account interest of \$157,924, which will fully fund the fellowship for this year.

Although the rate of return this year has been exceptional, moving forward, year on year the operating interest will change based on the total returns of the RCH Foundation Investment Corpus. Likewise the cost and priorities of the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship will also change over time and so the need for ROTA's active ongoing support continues.

The Fund will continue to be protected and applied exclusively for the RCH Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship, a unique program of research and care. While ROTA's recent generous contribution and careful planning with the hospital have secured the Fellowship over the near term, the long term future of the Fellowship may be strengthened through bequest commitments.

The RCH and RCH Foundation are deeply grateful for ROTA members' generosity as this service makes a vital difference for so many neurology patients and families around Australia, and befittingly honours the Rats' values and intent to positively impact the future.



*Dr Beth Cole, 2023 Fellow, at Rats of Tobruk Ward*

	Financial Year Ended 30 June				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 (projected)
<b>Fund Opening balance</b>	1,680,814	1,688,221	1,691,325	1,691,825	1,691,955
<b>Revenue</b>					
Donations	6,275	3,200	700	100	1,000
Interest - capital*	-	-	-	-	774,895
Interest - operating*	59,770	59,371	59,469	59,478	157,924
<b>Total revenue</b>	66,045	62,571	60,169	59,578	933,818
<b>Distributions**</b>					
<i>ROTA Fund contribution</i>					
Feb 19 - Jan 20	58,638				
Feb 20 - Jan 21		59,467			
Feb 21 - Jan 22			59,669		
Feb 22 - Jan 23				59,448	
Feb 23 - Jan 24***					80,000
<b>Fund Closing Balance</b>	<b>1,688,221</b>	<b>1,691,325</b>	<b>1,691,825</b>	<b>1,691,955</b>	<b>2,545,773</b>
<i>RCH Foundation contribution</i>					
Feb 19 - Jan 20	21,362				
Feb 20 - Jan 21		20,533			
Feb 21 - Jan 22			20,331		
Feb 22 - Jan 23				20,552	
Feb 23 - Jan 24					-
<b>TOTAL Distributions</b>	<b>80,000</b>	<b>80,000</b>	<b>80,000</b>	<b>80,000</b>	<b>80,000</b>
* Includes capital uplift of \$704,777.					
** Fellow appointments commence in February.					
*** Distribution of \$80,000 to be fully funded by ROTA.					
closing capital account					2,467,849
closing operating account					77,924
					2,545,773

## Impact of the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship

Each year in Australia, over 250,000 people are diagnosed with epilepsy. Yet, for around half of those, including around 35 per cent of children, the cause of the epilepsy is unknown. Epilepsy can have a devastating effect on children and their families and parents often live in constant fear that their child may die from a seizure.

The generous funding from the Rats of Tobruk Association provides the opportunity for the RCH to train neurologists to learn about the diagnosis and treatment of epilepsy.

Doctors who are awarded the Fellowship gain knowledge about care of children with epilepsy, the electrical function and the structure of the brain. These doctors also learn about specialised treatments including surgery to remove parts of the brain causing seizure.

Many of the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellows conduct research projects that are published in medical literature to improve the knowledge of other doctors around the world. Many Fellows return to their home country, taking the knowledge learned during their Fellowship to improve the lives of children around the world.



These doctors are now contributing to the efforts to discover the cause and find treatments for child epilepsy in hospitals around Australia and the world.

The following Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellows are now Neurologists at the RCH



Katherine Howell  
2011



Eunice Chan  
2013



Trupti Jadhav  
2014



Sarah Curnow  
2017



Emma  
Macdonald-Laurs  
2019



Kathryn Irving  
2020



Nikky Fearn  
2021

The funding from this Fellowship provides certainty for the Neurology Department; that we can provide the best care to our patients and improve outcomes for children and their families.



## Celebrating the Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellowship in 2023





## Where are they now?

### **Sameer Dal, 2022 Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellow**

Sameer has recently moved to Queensland and was pleased to be able to provide the following update on his research and career.

*You might recall, I have been working on the research project titled "Late-onset epileptic spasms (LOES): presentation, aetiology, pitfalls in diagnosis, and outcomes." Under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Simon Harvey, Dr. Katherine Howell, Dr. Emma Macdonald-Laurs, and A/Prof Simone Mandelstam, the project has been successfully completed. We are currently in the manuscript writing stage and are confident to publish it in one of the reputed epilepsy journals.*

*I am also pleased to inform you that I have recently completed my fellowship in paediatric neurology in 2024. Moving forward, I will be assuming the role of a Paediatric Neurologist and Epileptologist at the Queensland Children's Hospital in Brisbane. I am immensely grateful to the ROTA family for their support during my fellowship in epilepsy training. I am eager to apply the knowledge and experience gained to make a meaningful difference in the lives of children affected by epilepsy and to their families. This opportunity would not have been possible without the support of the ROTA family, and for that, I am truly thankful.*



**Sameer Dal, 2022 Fellow**

### **Beth Cole, 2023 Rats of Tobruk Neuroscience Fellow**

*My new neurology fellowship is split between RCH and MCRI. I am now in my final year of training, if all goes to plan! My current role includes two clinics per week, working in the general neurology clinic where my epilepsy skills often come in handy, as well as the demyelination clinic. This second clinic is the only multidisciplinary paediatric demyelination clinic in Australia, with input from allied health and nursing professionals as well as doctors, seeing patients with paediatric onset multiple sclerosis and other neuroimmune conditions. This is allowing me to further my training and interest in neuroinflammatory disorders, which I will hopefully specialise in as a consultant.*

*I continue my epilepsy interest through regular EEG reading, and am a sub investigator for a trial looking into the efficacy and safety of a novel antiseizure medication in children.*

*The rest of my work week is spent at the MCRI where I am learning research skills in the area of neuroimmune conditions. Amongst several research plans and projects, I hope to put the imaging skills I learnt through my epilepsy fellowship to use, by working with our epilepsy program imaging team to look at image processing in the multiple sclerosis cohort.*



**Beth Cole, 2023 Fellow**

*The Rats of Tobruk fellowship has set me up with broad and important clinical skills that will benefit the children I treat for the rest of my career. I utilise them every day, even when not working in the epilepsy space, as they are transferrable across multiple neurology domains. I am forever grateful for the support and contribution of the ROTA towards my training.*

## Thank you.

Thank you to all the ROTA members for your ongoing support of the Neurology Department. To those who have generously left a Gift in your Will to continue the incredible legacy of the Rats of Tobruk, thank you.

If you have any questions, or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to contact:

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