



## Stillbirth Research - Stillbirth & Viruses

At any level of examination stillbirth is a personal tragedy. There is no doubt that the death of a baby in utero, during birth or immediately after birth raises enormous medical and personal questions.

Professor William Rawlinson, Senior Medical Virologist at Prince of Wales Hospital, is heading a team of researchers aiming to provide a better diagnosis of stillbirths immediately, and a better understanding of the causes of stillbirths in the longer term. As clinicians, they feel it is their responsibility to answer those questions, and in a broader medical sense provide clinical information that will allow appropriate decisions to be made by both the parents and doctors. In a clinical sense, they need to determine how best to diagnose stillbirths, counsel parents, and prevent further stillbirths.

Despite improved obstetric care, neonatal care, and pediatric care, stillbirths remain a major unresolved public health issue and account for two-thirds of all perinatal deaths in Australia. Almost half of all stillbirths are of unknown cause, and even after autopsy, one-third of all stillbirths remain unexplained. As medical researchers, they are addressing the causes of stillbirths by studying the diagnosis in pregnant women [Munro, 2005], the diagnosis in stillborn babies (through molecular investigations of tissue from stillborn babies) [McIver, 2005], and the basic mechanisms of maternal – placental – fetal infection that result in passage of viruses from mother to baby and cause stillbirth [Jacques, 2005; Chow, 2005].

Professor Rawlinson's studies are aimed at diagnosing the causes of stillbirth, particularly identifying if viruses are associated with stillbirth, and under which conditions. Recent studies of the aetiology of stillbirth including cytomegalovirus (CMV), enteroviruses, adenoviruses, other herpesviruses, mycoplasmas and ureaplasmas, are found in stillborn babies.

To support this research, a grant has been requested of the NSW Department of Health (DOH) to provide \$400,000 annually for the next three years. The Stillbirth Foundation has written to the NSW DOH supporting this research as we wholeheartedly believe this research is important for a number of reasons, including:

- Given that 1 in every 100 babies are still-

born or die shortly after birth, it is now time that stillbirth gets the attention that these babies deserve. Babies cannot continue dying, often for no apparent reason, and a commitment to stillbirth research is needed not just from parents and families, but from researchers. It is delightful to find a dedicated team of researchers who will be working on this grant and the Stillbirth Foundation hopes that they can receive the encouragement and funds to continue so they can make a difference.

- This research grant will provide benefit to a broad community across NSW. The loss of a baby affects not just the mother and father, but also grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends. These people's lives are changed forever. Apart from the grief that stays forever, there are other implications from the death of a baby, for example: the immense anxiety felt in a subsequent pregnancy, the additional testing required in that pregnancy, the counseling required to learn to live with this loss.

- Professor Rawlinson and his team's research proposal is a collaborative effort. A range of public health providers, from a variety of Sydney hospitals, including leading and well respected Obstetricians & Gynaecologists, Paediatricians, Neo-

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### Medical Advisors

**Peter Barr**  
OAM, MBBS, PhD, FRACP

**Jonathan Morris**  
MB ChB, MM, FRANZCOG,  
DDU, CMFU, PhD

**Deborah de Wilde**  
OAM, BSW, RGN, CM



# Thank you to our Ball Supporters

The Stillbirth Foundation wishes to sincerely thank its' Ball supporters, without whom none of our success would be possible. We are overwhelmed with the number listed on this page, and we hope that you too find it marvelous. If ever the opportunity arises for you to patronize a listed business or meet an individual, please thank them for their support of the Stillbirth Foundation.

Action Photographics	Donna Hay Magazine	Jorgen & Maureen Knox	Rob Williams & Kate Stephens
Aimee Mason	Doug & Justine Cunningham	Kobe Jones	Roberts Restaurant at Peppertree
Arnotts Biscuits	The Eastern Hotel	Lagoon Seafood Restaurant	Ronald J Crisp Jeweller
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Australian Women's Weekly	Fruit Only	McGuigan Wines	Scott Young
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Clown Balloons	Jigsaw	NSW Lotteries	Toga Group
Coca Cola South Pacific	Jodie Henry	Pan Macmillan Australia	Tooheys
Cosmax Cosmetics	John Eales	Peter FitzSimons	Warner Music Australia
Cynthia Cooke	John Polley	Peter McInnes & KitchenAid	
Deborah Thomas	Johnson & Johnson Pacific	Power Credit Union	
Di Ayers	Professor Jonathan Morris	Dr Ric Gordon	

## Stuck on You Labels

Stuck on You make clothing labels and other personalized kids labels so that your children will never lose their belongings again! They produce an all Australian made range of vinyl stick-on, fabric iron-on labels, shoe labels, pencil labels and bag tags. They're bright and easy to read with fun icons to choose from. Their quality vinyls, fabrics and adhesives are second to none so the labels stay put in the dishwasher, microwave or washing machine. Kids love them for their designs and mums love them for the practicality.

Stuck On You is partnering with the Stillbirth Foundation to raise funds for stillbirth. A percentage of all sales made by Stillbirth Foundation families will be given to us! So, if you need labels, please order them from Stuck On You. It's easy... either call 1800 645 849 and mention Stillbirth Foundation when talking to the consultant or order on line at [www.stuckyonyou.biz](http://www.stuckyonyou.biz) and type "Stillbirth Foundation" in the fundraising line. The more we raise the better, so please encourage your friends and family to support Stuck On You too!



*Bianca and Jacques Jordaan looking stunning at our inaugural Ball!*

## We remember Laura Ambrogio

In this newsletter, we remember Laura Ambrogio, born 11th March 2003 at 28 weeks. Laura is pictured on page 1 with her parents, Emilio and Leanne, who each have dedicated much of their time and energy to the stillbirth cause and Leanne is on the Committee.

Laura, Emilio and Leanne's first child, died in utero when the placenta detached from Leanne's uterus.

Emilio and Leanne have had a second daughter, Sienna now 19 months and have just welcomed their third child, another beautiful daughter, Sofia Alexandra, into this world on 24th March 2006.

It is important to understand, that the Stillbirth Foundation represents all those families who have been affected by a stillbirth, whether from a known or un-

known cause, at any gestation from 20 weeks, like Laura. The loss of a baby at any time during a pregnancy or the neonate period is a traumatic experience. While focused on stillbirth, it is hoped that the Stillbirth Foundation supported research will have positive implications for an understanding of other forms of reproductive loss, such as miscarriage and neonatal death.



## Stillbirth Research (cont. from page 1)

natologists, midwives, and researchers are involved which will ensure the best results are achieved. The research will potentially benefit all of NSW, and I would hope that ultimately the findings will benefit families in other parts of Australia and the world.

- The focus on stillbirth and the results achieved through this research will provide a significant difference to the health of NSW mothers, fathers, babies and families. The opportunity, the hypotheses and the

will to study stillbirth and congenital infection and inflammation is available now. It will achieve an immediate benefit and potentially achieve the Stillbirth Foundation's longer term aim to reduce the incidence of stillbirth.

The Stillbirth Foundation was launched in October 2005 and has already raised over \$125,000 in funds. While we find this an admirable achievement, this money will only be of small benefit to researchers, who therefore must also seek government funding. As members

of the community, we will be contacting local members and lobbying the government to fund and take an active interest in stillbirth.

Bereaved parents, individually and collectively as the Stillbirth Foundation, have the power to effect a monumental change in the attitude toward stillbirth. We would encourage each of you to join us. If you would like to be directly involved in this project directly of lobbying the government regarding stillbirth or are willing to contact your local and state parliamentarians regarding stillbirth, please contact us.

## Little Feet Taking Big Steps Ball

The inaugural Stillbirth Foundation *Little Feet Taking Big Steps* Ball was held on the 4th February 2006 in the Grand Ballroom of the Hilton Hotel Sydney. By any measure it was a stunning success.

Our MC for the evening, Deborah Thomas (Editorial Director of the Australian Women's Weekly) led us through a jam packed evening of entertainment and fundraising.

Professor Jonathan Morris gave us an update on Stillbirth Research, before former Wallaby captain, Nick Farr-Jones, regaled us with stories of Wallabies' camaraderie and inspired us to view our inaugural ball as a first step in something big and not to

be put off by the size of our goals. We were then entertained by country singer, Melinda Schneider, fresh from performing at the Golden Guitar Awards. The band Swerve also kept us entertained with many sets during the night.

On the fundraising side of things, our wonderful volunteers, the Stillbirth Stars, worked hard selling raffle tickets all night, while the *Wine Coits* game proved to be enduring entertainment, and the silent auctions attracted many bids with five exciting live auctions being lead by Dr. Ric Gordon. All up, including tickets sales, we raised **over \$55,000** - an outstanding achievement!

Congratulations to the Stillbirth Foundation Committee for organising the event and to all those who helped make the night such a big success.



Deborah Thomas, Patron of the Stillbirth Foundation, and her husband, Vitek Czernuszyn

David Shaw



Professor Jonathan Morris and Dr Ric Gordon

## Johnson & Johnson Pacific

The Stillbirth Foundation wishes to sincerely thank Johnson & Johnson Pacific for their very generous **donation of \$25,000**. The donation was organised by Doug Cunningham who is the Sales Director for Johnson & Johnson Pacific. Doug and his wife Justine had a stillborn baby girl, Emma Paige Cunningham on 20th December, 2004. On the 16th of February this year their second daughter, Phoebe Charlotte, was born.

The world's most comprehensive healthcare company, Johnson & Johnson Pacific are a fabulous company who pride themselves on their support of their local community in line with their Credo, and we are very grateful for their commitment to the stillbirth cause.





stillbirth  
FOUNDATION INC.

little feet taking big steps...to reduce stillbirth

Stillbirth Foundation operating within the Mater Hospital  
PO BOX 958, North Sydney NSW 2059  
ABN 36 054 594 375  
Phone: 9900 7596; E-mail: info@stillbirthfoundation.org.au

## Stillbirth Foundation Aims

The Stillbirth Foundation operates to ultimately reduce the incidence of stillbirth. To achieve this goal Stillbirth Foundation has commenced with the aims to:

- ⇒ increase public awareness of stillbirth, and the effects it has on women and their families.
- ⇒ support hospital bereavement services.
- ⇒ and most importantly, to fund and encourage research into stillbirth.

## Deborah Thomas & Sally Burleigh Public Relations

The Stillbirth Foundation is incredibly fortunate to have received support from many high profile individuals and companies over the last few months. Two notable supporters are Deborah Thomas and Sally Burleigh Public Relations.

**Deborah Thomas**, Editorial Director of the Australian Women's Weekly, has kindly agreed to be the **Patron of the Stillbirth Foundation**. Deborah will be an excellent ambassador for the stillbirth cause, not only because of her high-profile, caring nature and excellent communication skills, but because she personally understands the unique experience of a baby dying. Deborah and her husband Vitek (pictured together on page 3) lost their first baby, a son Isaac born at 22 weeks in 1999.

In addition, the well known PR company, **Sally Burleigh Public Relations** have offered to work pro-bono for the Stillbirth Foundation in seeking publicity and assist-

### Are you on the Stillbirth Foundation mailing list?

If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, or are keen to be involved in any of our fundraising ventures or to be notified of any news that we may have please send your contact details to:

info@stillbirthfoundation.org.au or phone 0419 995 464



### HOW CAN YOU HELP THE STILLBIRTH FOUNDATION?

We need the support of our community and businesses. Any contributions would be well received to aid us in raising money so we can meet our goals. You can help us by:

Giving a tax deductible donation.

Supporting our Fundraising efforts by:

- attending our functions;
- donating prizes, venues, catering, alcohol or decorations;
- running a fundraising event for Stillbirth Foundation.

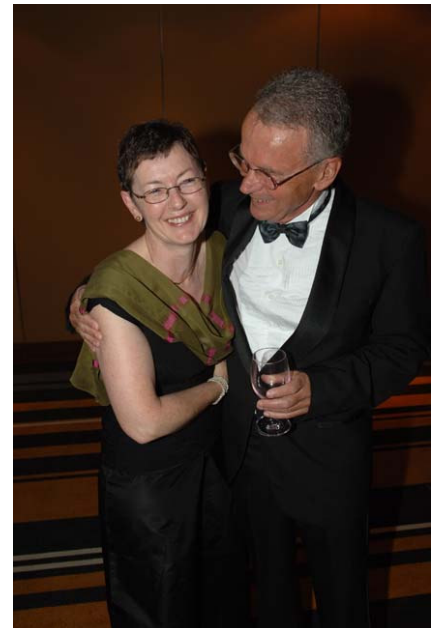
[www.stillbirthfoundation.org.au](http://www.stillbirthfoundation.org.au)



ing with events. Sally Burleigh and Alison Avery assisted with publicity for the Ball, and for their time and enthusiasm we are incredibly grateful.

With such competent and able people assisting the Stillbirth Foundation it can be assured that the Foundation can only continue to grow at small steps to reach our ultimate goal to reduce the incidence of stillbirth.

*Pictured at the right is our beloved Deb de Wilde with husband Peter Barr enjoying themselves at the Little Feet Taking Big Steps Ball. As previously reported Deb has been awarded an Order of Australia Medal for her work with bereaved families. Deb will be presented with this Medal at Government House in May 2006—Congratulations!*



Little Feet taking big steps... to reduce stillbirth

