

SBMS Seminar

Date: Friday 3 June, 2022
Time: 2 – 3pm
Location: 81-313 - Otto Hirschfeld Building, Learning Theatre
Chair: Professor Maree Smith

Equity in Australian STEMM: what are the issues and potential solutions?

with Professor Louise Purton

St. Vincent's Institute of Medical Research, Victoria

For decades it has been recognised that there is a lack of women represented in senior positions in STEMM globally. In the last two decades there have been an increase in awareness and initiatives in Australia to improve recruitment of women into STEMM, however, this has made very little progress in changing the notorious scissor graph. A number of groups in Australia are delving deeper into the underlying issues behind the lack of retention of women in senior positions, and our recently-formed group, Equity in Australian STEMM, has contributed to this research. In this seminar I will present some of our findings of NHMRC and ARC outcomes and recommendations of what actions need to be taken to improve retention of women in STEMM.



Biography:

Professor Louise Purton received her PhD from The University of Melbourne in 1995 and undertook post-doctoral studies at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle. During this time she discovered that the vitamin A derivative, all-trans retinoic acid (ATRA), has different effects in haematopoiesis and that ATRA enhances haematopoietic stem cell (HSC) self-renewal. She continued her independent research at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre (PMCC) from 2000-2004, focusing on the distinct effects of the different retinoic acid receptors (RARs) in haematopoiesis. She identified that RAR γ is a key regulator of HSC self-renewal and that loss of RAR γ has profound effects on haematopoiesis, due to both intrinsic and extrinsic effects. She was a visiting scientist in Professor David Scadden's laboratory at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, 2004-2007, continuing to supervise a research team at PMCC until the end of 2005. Her senior author research identified novel roles for cells of the bone marrow microenvironment in regulating myeloproliferative-like disorders, pioneering studies that were published in Cell in 2007.

Louise returned to Melbourne in 2008 to establish and head the Stem Cell Regulation Unit at St. Vincent's Institute. She was an Associate Director there from 2010 to 2019. She is continuing her research on how haematopoiesis is regulated both intrinsically and extrinsically in normal and diseased states. Louise has a passion for translational research and to date her research has resulted in four clinical trials. She is internationally recognised for her research, has received funding from numerous national and international funding bodies [including NHMRC, NIH, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of America (LLSA), Worldwide Cancer Research] and has held Fellowships from NHMRC and LLSA. She is a former member of the Board of Directors, International Society for Experimental Hematology (ISEH) and is the current Chair of the American Society of Hematology (ASH) Scientific Committee for Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine. She is also passionate about fostering the career development of the younger researchers and is an advocate for supporting all minority groups in the workplace, including on Twitter: @purton_louise. Louise has had a profound bilateral hearing impairment since she was a child, became a cochlear implant recipient in 2018 and had her second cochlear implant in July 2021. She is the recipient of the 2022 International Society for Experimental Hematology McCulloch and Till Award for her research contributions.