



**LIONS RHEUMATISM AND ARTHRITIS
MEDICAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION Australia
DISTRICT 201 V 1-4**

ABN 97 824 299 568

Web Page; <http://lionsrheumatismfoundation.org.au/>

All correspondence to Secretary/Treasurer

Chairman

PDG Pauline Harris OAM
1 Rushworth St Watsonia VIC 3087
Ph H+F 9435 4040 Mobile 0411 134 165
Email zoesfam@optusnet.com.au

Secretary/ Treasurer

PDG Eric Gittins
1 Patyah St Diamond Creek VIC 3089
Mobile 0411244779
Email gittinsej@optusnet.com.au

I am writing to you on behalf of Professor Eric Morand to thank you for your recent contribution towards Lupus research here at Monash University. Professor Morand was also keen to share an update with you on how Monash University, and the Monash School of Clinical Sciences, is adjusting to these unprecedented circumstances.

Firstly, we want to extend our best wishes to you, your family and your community. We hope you are safe and well and managing to adapt to this new, and constantly changing, COVID-19 world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed our world dramatically. As Australia's largest university, where communities gather for education, research, business, recreation and entertainment, we are, of course, not excluded from the impacts of this global health emergency. But we are also well prepared to respond to this situation. In line with government health advice, Monash has implemented our pandemic plan. This means that we have adapted the way we deliver our high-quality education, research and services to safeguard the health and well being of our students, staff and wider community. But while the way we operate day-to-day has changed, our values haven't. We are still working to ensure our world-class research programs continue, our students receive the highest quality education, and we stay as connected as possible with our supporters, alumni and friends.

At Monash, we are also doing everything in our power to help tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

You may have read about the promotion of the lupus drug hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19, including by US President Donald Trump. Professor Morand has been very active in opposing this poorly evidenced idea. Sadly, this unwarranted hype has resulted in worldwide shortages of the medicine for its real purpose, the control of lupus. The latest news is that good quality studies have not shown any effect of this drug on COVID-19, and demand has eased; in addition, state and federal governments in Australia have limited access to preserve supply for our patients. I hope those near you with lupus will have access to the medicine soon; meanwhile please check Arthritis Australia website for updated advice on medicine use during the pandemic.

We are very fortunate that COVID-19 has not affected the current lupus research program. Whilst some team members are on a work-from-home plan, Professor Morand and his team continue to progress their research, and there is some very good news to report. With your wonderful support, Professor Morand was able to establish the AsiaPacific Lupus Collaboration, which has enabled Monash to now manage the largest cohort of lupus patients ever assembled, with over 3,000 patients from around Asia-Pacific currently in the study, including from many centres in China. This culminated in multiple papers in 2019 in the leading journal Lancet Rheumatology, yielding a new measure for lupus outcomes that is already being adopted worldwide to get better outcomes from trials.

This international profile also resulted in Professor Morand being chosen as the global lead investigator for the TULIP-2 trial of the new lupus medicine, anifrolumab. We are thrilled and proud to tell you that this trial was positive, showing impressive improvements in lupus in patients treated with this drug. The results were recently reported in The New England Journal of Medicine, the highest ranked medical journal worldwide. The sponsor, AstraZeneca, anticipates a submission to the US Food and Drug Administration mid-2020, with approval hoped for in early 2021. This could be the real breakthrough we have been hoping for all along, and the Monash School of Clinical Sciences is so proud to have had a leading role in its success.

Please rest assured that the research you are supporting will continue to progress. Monash will be here long after the threat of COVID-19 has subsided, and we will keep setting new benchmarks and breaking new ground in research across all faculties. We will continue to keep you updated. We wish to acknowledge how much we value your generous support. When the COVID-19 crisis abates, our students and researchers will continue to be able to access the opportunities that Monash offers thanks to you. We will keep you informed as we respond to these unprecedented times.

On behalf of Professor Morand, I thank you for your continued and valued support. Our collaboration and partnership with you is more important than ever. If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to pass on a message of support to Eric and his team, please feel free to contact me. I would be delighted to hear from you.

Dr. Alexandra Haendel
Donor Relations Adviser

Donor Relations
External Relations, Development and Alumni
Office of the President and Vice-Chancellor
Locked Bag 7
Monash University VIC 3800
Australia

