

A Bold Mission to Relieve Chronic Pain

The Churack Chair of Chronic Pain
Education and Research



Chronic pain does not discriminate, it can affect anyone.

Chronic pain is defined as any pain which lasts longer than three months. It has multiple causes, is very complex and is little understood.

It has been acknowledged as the biggest unrecognised health problem in Australia today with the cost to the community being in excess of \$34 billion (Access Economics, 2007).

For some sufferers it is a life sentence.

Chronic pain can be:

- › pain resulting from damage to tissues, such as arthritis, whereby sufferers usually report a severe aching or throbbing pain; and
- › nerve pain (neuropathic pain) resulting from damage to nerves, caused by injuries or diseases such as diabetes and shingles.

The pain can be so disabling it severely limits the ability of the sufferer to work. Driving a car can be impossible; simple household chores become a battle and, for some people, even getting out of bed can become a nightmare.

In fact: **“The experience can range from mild discomfort to excruciating torture. Some patients are unable to work, or walk or sleep; some can hardly wear clothes; contact with the skin is experienced as an unbearable burning.”** Bennett G.J, 1998

Not only does this debilitating condition present challenges to the sufferer, the unquantifiable damage to the emotional and psychological wellbeing of those who care for them is profound.

Sadly, one in five Australians suffers with chronic pain and the list of patients awaiting treatment grows each day. Chronic pain does not discriminate, it can affect anyone.

Currently, there is no cure for neuropathic pain, so new approaches to treatment are desperately needed.

The key to this lies in **research** into the mechanisms that produce this type of chronic pain and **education** of our medical students into the treatment of those who suffer with chronic pain.

Chronic pain – the challenge



You can help make a difference

The University of Notre Dame Australia is committed to reducing the impact of chronic pain in our community through research and the education of medical students in the area of chronic pain management.

The Churack Chair of Chronic Pain Education and Research was a visionary initiative made possible by the generosity of Geoff and Moira Churack and their family who, in 2013, donated \$1 million to establish the Chair. Since that original donation, other donors have given a further \$1 million towards this project which is now underway.

This support has enabled Notre Dame, in partnership with St John of God Subiaco Hospital, to establish the Chair with an inaugural appointment made in 2015.

For the project to reach its full potential, we need to raise a further \$1 million.

Your contribution towards this initiative will not only better aid and equip future medical graduates in the area of specialised chronic pain treatment and care, it will shape the direction of chronic pain research and rehabilitation across Australia and throughout the world.

With that in mind, the following information will help you to understand more about the project and why we would be so grateful to have your support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Celia Hammond', written over a horizontal line.

Professor Celia Hammond

Vice Chancellor

The University of Notre Dame Australia



Geoff's story

Geoff Churack, a successful Western Australian businessman, has suffered from chronic neuropathic pain for eight years. His condition has resulted from past injuries and unsuccessful back surgery. His pain is constant, unremitting and has had a devastating effect on his personal, business and family life.

Geoff, with time, has come to realise that many doctors do not possess a comprehensive awareness or understanding of the many issues facing chronic pain sufferers and has independently researched and tried, numerous treatment options.

He was appalled to discover that the teaching of pain medicine to graduates at Australian universities is not an essential part of a medical degree.

Geoff has come to the conclusion that a coordinated program of research linked to medical education is the most likely route to solve this excruciatingly debilitating condition which affects one in five Australians. With this in mind, Geoff, his wife Moira and their family have generously donated \$1 million seed funding to The University of Notre Dame Australia to establish **The Churack Chair of Chronic Pain Education and Research** – the sole aim of which is to further research into chronic pain and provide appropriate – and relevant – medical education and patient rehabilitation.



The Churack Chair of Chronic Pain Education and Research – Professor Eric Visser

In April 2015, following an international search, Western Australian Professor Eric Visser was appointed as the inaugural Churack Chair of Chronic Pain Education and Research. He is an internationally-acclaimed medical specialist who has a comprehensive academic CV and brings with him a wealth of experience in the area of pain medicine.

Not only does Professor Visser have substantial expertise in both acute and chronic pain management, he also has a significant history of teaching, examination and training of anaesthetic registrars and fellows. This history and experience he now brings to the undergraduate curriculum of Medicine at The University of Notre Dame Australia.

Most importantly, Professor Visser brings enormous vision and a vibrant energy to **The Churack Chair of Chronic Pain Education and Research**. As a teacher, he empowers students with an enthusiasm for learning and a desire to understand this issue. His leadership will ensure that research undertaken is translated into the education offered to Notre Dame's medical students – thus guaranteeing that, upon graduation, all students will possess a comprehensive understanding of chronic pain, including strategies for drug use and their side effects.

As part of **The Churack Chair of Chronic Pain Education and Research**, Professor Visser will continue his work as a specialist in pain medicine at St John of God Subiaco Hospital and, with a team of pain professionals, will focus on key areas of pain research which will contribute to a better understanding of chronic pain.

Since Professor Visser took up his appointment, he has already made significant inroads into the day-to-day practical education of Notre Dame's students within the classroom and hospital corridors.

The University of Notre Dame Australia and its Partners

The University of Notre Dame Australia, with courses in Medicine, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Health Sciences and Counselling, is well placed to address, in an holistic manner, the issue of chronic pain in the community.

With this in mind, Notre Dame and St John of God Subiaco Hospital have partnered to address the issue.

St John of God Subiaco Hospital is a comprehensive health care facility which caters for a wide variety of specialty services including acute pain medicine. Part of a national group, it has a strong focus on health and medical research which is central to the delivery of excellent healthcare now and in the future.

It ensures patient care is informed by the best evidence, and that, where appropriate, cutting edge therapies and technology can be accessed.

In partnership with The Churack Chair, and under the leadership of Professor Visser, this cutting edge research and practice will be translated into educating Notre Dame's Medicine students on both the Fremantle and Sydney Campuses so that the entire community will benefit.

The University of Notre Dame Australia is committed to research in basic pain neurosciences and developing links with world leading researchers. This includes Murdoch University who are a key collaborator in the area of pain research.

The University of Notre Dame Australia, in partnership with leading health provider St John of God Subiaco Hospital and lead by internationally-acclaimed Professor Eric Visser, invites you to help fulfil this vision.

This is an opportunity to be involved in assisting a great leap forward in health care history and help change the future for chronic pain sufferers.

The teaching of pain medicine to medical undergraduates, as a core part of their degree will be crucial in a field where it is currently learned by trial and error. Research and education are the keys to success!

Please join with us in raising at least another \$1 million to ensure this project can reach its potential and not only bring a quality of life back to chronic pain sufferers but also a healing knowledge to Australian doctors and health care professionals.

All gifts to The University of Notre Dame Australia are fully tax deductible and will be acknowledged accordingly. The University of Notre Dame Australia is endorsed as a deductible gift recipient and as an income tax exempt entity under the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.

To discuss your support of The Churack Chair of Chronic Pain Education and Research you are invited to contact Jennifer Healey, Campus Manager, Office of University Relations on +61 8 9433 0614 or email jennifer.healey@nd.edu.au.



The Objects of The University of Notre Dame Australia are:

- a) the provision of university education within a context of Catholic faith and values; and
- b) the provision of an excellent standard of –
 - i) teaching, scholarship and research;
 - ii) training for the professions; and
 - iii) pastoral care for its students.

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