THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

MMS Department of Surgery

Annual Research Showcase

Scalpel to Startup

Program
Tuesday 10th November 2026



The Department of Surgery Research Committee presents the 2026 DoS Annual Research Showcase. We welcome a stellar line-up of academics and clinicians to present their research.

The 2026 DoS Annual Research Showcase will:

- Showcase research within the department
- Highlight the diverse research journeys
- Engage in a Q&A with audience members
- Promote collaborative opportunities

In 2026, we're excited to invite you to join us for this year's DoS Research Showcase, celebrating the theme: **Scalpel to Start-Up**

Program

Event:	Department of Surgery Annual Research Showcase		
Date:	10 November 2026	**Time:**	1:00pm –6:30pm
Venue:	Woodward Conference Centre, 10th Floor Melbourne Law Building 106 Parkville VIC		
Zoom Link: **Password:** **Meeting ID:**	https://unimelb.zoom.us/j/86798215052?pwd=OujXsybpCp5xh3tBb7SbvL2ueiMLX7.1 026845 867 9821 5052		
Registration:	Click Here		
Enquiries:	michelle.marcola@unimelb.edu.au chris.kearney@unimelb.edu.au		

1:00	**Registration**	
1:05 – 1:15	**Introduction and Acknowledgement of Country** **Prof Marcos Perini** – Austin Health/ The University of Melbourne	
1:15 – 1:30	**Welcome** **Prof Justin Yeung** – Professor of Surgery and Consultant Colorectal Surgeon Acting Head of the Department of Surgery MMS, University of Melbourne Head of the Department of Surgery - Western Precinct	
SESSION 1	**Keynote 1 and DoS Presentations**	**Chair: A/Prof Luis Alarcon-Martinez**
1:30 – 1:50 **Keynote Speaker**	**Mr Michael Posel -** *Executive Director of the Melbourne Entrepreneurial Centre (MEC)/ University of Melbourne* "Impact through Commercialisation"	
1.50 – 2.05	**A/Prof Joseph Ischia–** *Austin Health/University of Melbourne* "Akeeko Stent Inserter: an Entrepreneur's journey"	

2:05 – 2:25	**Dr Chiu Kang** – *Northern Health/University of Melbourne* "The unlikely researcher: In the age of personal AI research assistants"	
2.25 – 3:00	**RHD Rapid Fire 5x5' Presentations**	**Chair: Dr James Dimou**
	Alan Nicol – *Ophthalmology/CERA* **Muditha Wijesinghe** – Austin Health **Dilan Bozanoglu** – *Ophthalmology/CERA* **Amanda Liesegang** – *Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre* **Yan Zhang** – *Ophthalmology/CERA*	
3.00 – 3.30	**BREAK AFTERNOON TEA**	
SESSION 2	**Keynote 2 and DoS Presentations**	**Chair: Dr Alex Besson**
3:30 – 3:45	**Prof Phong Tran –** *Western Health/University of Melbourne* "From a Footscray Theatre to a Swiss Boardroom - How an Australian surgeon came to evaluate, redesign and licence for a global implant company"	
3:45 – 4:00	**Dr James Dimou** – *RMH/University of Melbourne* "The translational significance of the 'pan cancer' paradigm in brain metastasis"	
4:00 – 4:15	**Prof Rick Liu** – CERA*/University of Melbourne* "The gift of sight: transformative RNA editing therapy for IRDs"	
4.15 – 4:30	**Andrew Batty** – *Chief Commercialisation Officer MedTech* "Consider Commercialisation Early when Translating Research"	
4:30 – 4:50 **Keynote Speaker**	**Prof Keith Martin -** CERA*/University of Melbourne* "Impact through innovation at the Centre for Eye Research Australia"	

SESSION 3	**Panel Discussion – Tips of the trade**	**Chair: Dr Russell Hodgson**
4:50 – 5:20	***Prof Pete Williams*** *– Deputy Director of the Centre for Eye Research Australia, Research Lead of the Neuroprotection and Repair Unit at CERA/University of Melbourne* ***A/Prof Erich Rutz*** *– Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon and The Hugh Williamson Gait Laboratory at the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH)/University of Melbourne* ***Prof Michael Coote*** *– Principal investigator, Glaucoma Surgical Research (CERA)/ University of Melbourne* ***Prof Justin Yeung*** *- Professor of Surgery and Consultant Colorectal Surgeon* *Acting Head of the Department of Surgery MMS, University of Melbourne* *Head of the Department of Surgery - Western Precinct*	
5:20 – 5:35	**Closing Remarks & Rapid-Fire Award**	**Prof Marcos Perini**
5:30 – 6:30	**Refreshments**	

Speakers

Michael D. Poisel

Executive Director, Melbourne Entrepreneurial Centre



Michael has spent almost 20 years spinning out companies from universities. Currently the Executive Director of the Melbourne Entrepreneurial Centre, he is leading the effort to scale the operations there into an enterprise that meets the needs of everyone in the university ecosystem (students, staff, researchers, and alumni).

Previously Michael built entrepreneurial programs for the University of Pennsylvania over 16 years, and was responsible for creating Penn's internal venture studio. Prior to Penn, Michael spent 10 years making venture capital investments and 5 years in aerospace manufacturing. He has two engineering degrees and an M.B.A. from The Wharton School of Business.

A/Prof Joseph Ischia

MBBS PhD FRACS (Urol)



Associate Professor Joseph Ischia is a urologist and surgeon scientist at the University of Melbourne and Deputy Head of Urology at Austin Health. He has 15 years of experience in major open and robotic urological cancer surgery, with a particular interest in the role of urologists in managing advanced prostate cancer, including the use of androgen receptor pathway inhibitors.

His research focuses on medical devices and artificial intelligence in urology. He founded the Talking Urology podcast and MedLitGo.com. He is CEO and cofounder of Akeeko Medical, a clinical stage medtech company that has raised A$15 million in total funding to develop a device for bedside ureteric stent insertion under local anaesthesia. The device is progressing through FDA and TGA regulatory pathways and is being evaluated in a multicentre real world evidence study.

Dr Chiu Kang

FRACS MBBS BMedSc MSurgicalEd



Dr Chiu Kang graduated from the University of Melbourne Medical School in 2010, was awarded Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (FRACS) in 2019, and holds a Master of Surgical Education from the University of Melbourne.

He serves as a Director of Clinical Training and is the Chair of the Simulation Subcommittee for the Vic/Tas General Surgical Education and Training (GSA) Committee. He completed advanced subspecialty training in laparoscopic surgery, upper gastrointestinal procedures, and therapeutic endoscopy.

His academic and clinical interests encompass general surgical conditions, diagnostic and interventional gastroenterology, simulation-based medical education, and the integration of personal AI into daily practice—focusing on leveraging technology to optimize clinical workflows and improve working conditions for junior medical staff.

Professor Phong Tran

MBBS (Hons) FRACS (Orth) FAOrthoA



Phong Tran has worked with a global implant manufacturer across three products. He was an early evaluator of a cementless femoral stem now implanted more than 45,000 times worldwide. He designed a retractor in Australia that is now licensed for international release. He helped launch the company's new strategic focus in knee replacement. He discusses what a multinational actually wants from a surgeon, how to reach the person who can say yes, and the lessons learnt along the way.

Professor Phong Tran is Head of Orthopaedic Surgery at Western Health, Honorary Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Melbourne, and Program Director of the Australian Institute of Musculoskeletal Science.

Dr James Dimou

MBBS MBA PhD FRACS

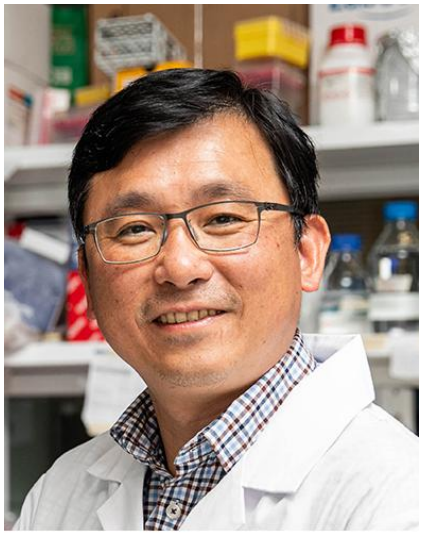


James Dimou is an early to mid-career neurosurgeon-scientist with a distinct neuro-oncology interest, affiliated with the UniMelb Department of Surgery, and RMH Department of Neurosurgery.

His main scientific focus is the development of a patient-derived ex vivo tumour model which can accurately define behaviour and expected treatment response in brain metastasis, however, concurrently, he is also co-ordinating a diverse portfolio of projects within the brain metastasis realm, including molecular analysis, surgical outcomes, population-based studies, leptomeningeal disease and health economics

Professor Rick Liu

BMedSci, PhD



Professor Rick Liu is a Principal Investigator and Research Lead of the Genetic Engineering Research program at the Centre for Eye Research Australia, and a Professorial Fellow in Ophthalmology at the University of Melbourne.

He is internationally recognised for his expertise in genetic engineering, gene editing, and retinal gene therapy for blinding eye diseases. His current initiatives, most notably RNA editing (EDITRA) and OcularSwitch technologies, aim to deliver durable, potentially single-dose treatments that transform care for inherited retinal diseases and neovascular eye disease.

Rick has built a highly productive translational research program, underpinned by competitive funding from bodies including the NHMRC and MRFF. His work spans novel genetic technologies and advanced delivery approaches to develop new treatments for retinal diseases.

His laboratory holds expertise across the full therapeutic development pathway, from generating disease models and designing gene-based treatments to evaluating safety and efficacy in preclinical systems. The team also works closely with clinicians to advance clinical translation in ophthalmology research.

Andrew Batty

Chief Commercialisation Officer MedTech



Andrew Batty is a MedTech executive, entrepreneur and experienced company director with more than 25 years' experience across the healthcare sector. He has a proven track record in developing and executing strategies to commercialise innovative and emerging technologies.

Andrew holds a Bachelor of Science and Master of Commerce, serves on multiple boards, and holds a commercialisation role at the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery (ACMD). He is Founder and Director of Wonderland Medical, advising organisations from start-ups to established companies on commercial strategy and growth.

He has held senior leadership roles across sales, marketing, business development, clinical operations and general management in pharma, biotech and medical devices. Andrew has helped establish and commercialise private and ASX-listed companies, including CogState, IM Medical and Anatomics, developing global distribution networks, manufacturing partnerships and successful exits. More recently, he has founded and supported MedTech ventures including VividWhite, iFix Medical, Morand Medical, BIENCO and NeuroInsights.

Professor Keith Martin

MA BMBCh DM MRCP FRCOphth FRANZCO FARVO FAHMS



Keith Martin is Director of the Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA) and Ringland Anderson Professor, Head of Ophthalmology at the University of Melbourne and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences. Until January 2019, he was Professor and Head of Ophthalmology at the University of Cambridge, and Deputy Director of the University's John van Geest Centre for Brain Repair. He was also Clinical Director for Ophthalmology at Cambridge University Hospital.

Professor Martin is working to develop new treatments for eye disease using gene therapy and other techniques. His other current main research interest is in regeneration and repair of the optic nerve.

He is co-founder of three retinal gene therapy companies: Quethera, a Cambridge-based gene therapy company which developed a gene therapy for glaucoma that is currently in advanced pre-clinical development with Astellas Inc; Ikarovec, a second gene therapy spin out company from his Cambridge lab developing gene therapies for common retinal diseases; and Mirugen, developing cell reprogramming technology for inherited retinal diseases.

He is also a founding Director of Enlighten Imaging, developing hyperspectral imaging technology for the diagnosis of retinal and neurological diseases; and Chair of Cerulea Clinical Trials, a new state-of-the-art ophthalmic clinical trials centre which is now one of the largest such facilities in the world. Additionally, he is working to progress CERA's latest start up company, Adara Bio, which has developed cutting edge new gene editing technology for inherited retinal disease.

Clinically, Professor Martin specialises in the medical and surgical management of complex glaucoma. He was President of the World Glaucoma Association from 2018-20, and is a Past President of the UK and Ireland Glaucoma Society and the Australia and New Zealand Glaucoma Society.

Panel Members

A/Prof Erich Rutz

MD, PhD, FRACS



A/Prof. Erich Rutz joined the orthopaedic department and The Hugh Williamson Gait Laboratory at the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) in April 2020.

For the last 15 years he worked as a consultant at the University Children's Hospital Basel, Switzerland, where he was Head of the Gait Laboratory and Head of Neuromuscular Hip Surgery Programme. Erich has a strong interest in all neuromuscular conditions and in particular in cerebral palsy (CP).

In 2009/2010 he worked as a research fellow in the Hugh Williamson Gait Laboratory at RCH on a major project "Outcomes of Single-event Multilevel Surgery (SEMLS)" in children with CP.

Erich focuses on the surgical treatment of disabled, ambulant and non-ambulant, children. His surgical expertise is in both surgery for ambulant children (SEMLS) and one-stage, hip reconstruction.

He has written more than 100 scientific papers and 26 book chapters and completed his habilitation thesis ("Venia Docendi") in 2013 at the medical faculty of the University Basel, which is the highest university degree that can be awarded for orthopaedics and traumatology of the musculoskeletal system.

In addition, he completed of his PhD thesis in biomechanics by June 2021. Dr. Rutz' academic work has been recognised by 12 national and international awards. In March 2022 he was appointed as inaugural Bob Dickens Chair for Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Melbourne.

Professor Pete Williams

BSc.(Hons), PhD



Pete Williams is Deputy Director of the Centre for Eye Research Australia, Research Lead of the Neuroprotection and Repair Unit at CERA, and an Honorary Professorial Fellow in Ophthalmology at the University of Melbourne.

Through his formal education and postdoctoral training, he focused on the complex nature of sensory systems and how they could be fixed. He aims to develop neuroprotective strategies for neurodegenerative diseases by studying the neurobiology of complex diseases and developing clinically translatable therapeutic strategies.

Professor Pete Williams' lab uses the eye as a model of the central nervous system to elucidate early mechanisms of neurodegeneration. He and his team utilise modern molecular tools to delicately dissect pathways pertaining to early aging and neurodegenerative disease mechanisms and to identify potential therapeutic targets, which are then tested and verified in animal and cell models of neurodegeneration.

He collaborates with basic scientists and research clinicians to develop discoveries into targeted therapeutics in the clinic. This includes active participation and leadership in Phase II and III clinical trials as well as commercial ventures based his lab's discoveries.

Key research questions

- How can we use existing materials or compounds for ‘simple’ solutions and for glaucoma patients to help themselves?
- How can we develop a drug therapy for glaucoma that is prescribable, titratable, and highly specific?
- How can we develop a one-shot gene therapy that is neuroprotective and regenerative for patients at all stages of glaucoma?

Professor Michael Coote

MB, BS, FRANZCO, GAICD



Michael has more than 25 years of experience in clinical practice and has performed over 22,000 surgical procedures, with a particular focus on complex glaucoma and cataract surgery.

He has held major leadership roles including inaugural Clinical Director of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital and Head of Unit. He has served for nearly 20 years as an independent non-executive director on Healthcare Boards, chairing board-level Clinical Quality and Research & Education Committees.

Michael’s research career began with glaucoma genetics at the University of Iowa, contributing to the discovery of the GLC1A gene. Since then, he has been Principal or Coordinating Investigator in over 40 clinical trials, including six first-in-human studies.

Michael is co-founder and Chairman of Vivid White, where he has led the development of a novel microfluidic glaucoma drainage device—from computational modelling through to human clinical trials now underway in Australia.

He has authored 62 peer-reviewed publications, contributed to multiple textbooks, and developed one of the world’s most widely used ophthalmic education platforms.

He currently serves as Secretary General of the International Glaucoma Surgery Society and continues to shape global education and collaboration in glaucoma care.

Professor Justin Yeung

BMBS DM PG Dip Med FRCSEd (Gen Surg) FRACS



Professor Justin Yeung is the Head of the Department of Surgery and holds the Chair of Surgery, Western Precinct, University of Melbourne. Professor Yeung is also a consultant colorectal surgeon at Western Health.

Justin graduated from Nottingham University in the U.K. and went on to complete his general surgical and colorectal specialist training in Nottingham. He then underwent a pelvic floor fellowship in Sheffield, in the United Kingdom before being awarded a HCA International Foundation Scholarship which allowed him to complete a year's specialist colorectal cancer fellowship at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Melbourne, Australia.

Justin returned to the U.K. and worked at the University Hospitals of Leicester as a consultant colorectal and pelvic floor surgeon in 2010. He was then awarded the honorary title of Senior Lecturer in 2016 with the University of Leicester.

In 2017, Justin became the Head of the Department of Surgery, University of Melbourne, at Western Health, and since then has ngaarden developed research interests in Colorectal Surgery in particular in the field of improving cancer outcomes through multidisciplinary collaboration.

Professor Yeung currently leads the Department of Surgery, AI Radiomics group at Western Precinct and is also the Education Committee Chair for the Department of Surgery, University of Melbourne.

Justin is keen to support and promote education and training in the clinical environment, in particular with the development of online educational materials.