



# If you want to help save lives, then go on trial



**IAN FRAZER**

**W**HEN Hawthorn captain Jarryd Roughead spoke at half-time in the match against Sydney a few weeks ago, he talked about more than football: he talked about the recently trialled treatment that saved his life.

When a melanoma in his lip spread into his bloodstream and his lungs, Jarryd's doctor suggested that he consider a new immunotherapy treatment that had just been through clinical trials. He knew that a cure wouldn't come overnight, but his new treatment gave him hope that he'd survive to be a grandad.

We all know how complex cancer can be to conquer.

What you may not know is that many of the medical breakthroughs that have changed and saved lives would not have been possible without people, both sick and healthy, generously volunteering their time to participate in clinical trials.

Jarryd's story is both a reminder and a prime example of another life saved, thanks to clinical trials.

From the point of view of a researcher, the importance of people getting involved in these

kinds of trials cannot be understated. Australia is a world leader in cancer research — and the seemingly slow advance towards a cure isn't for a lack of trying, or a lack of talent. Some of the most brilliant minds are working in the field, but unfortunately that's not all it takes.

Cancer isn't one disease. When we're researching a treatment for a certain type of cancer, we look at finding unique weaknesses in that type. Since it's hard to imagine a single cure-all ever being developed, the research is extensive, and continuing.

In 2006, I was named Australian of the Year for my part in the development of the cervical cancer vaccine. Now, in 2018, we're on the cusp of eliminating cervical cancer globally. It's taken a lot of work, a healthy dose of luck, and importantly, the backing of the wider community.

Most Australians won't realise the huge impact they can have in the fight against disease — and not just against cancer. You might be surprised by the broad range of health problems that are the subjects of clinical trials: obesity, pre-term birth risk, mental ill-health. Even the cochlear implant was made possible by clinical trials.

If I asked if you'd ever thought about taking part in a clinical trial, what would your answer be?

For most, I'd say it might be no.

While people may think that in general they're a good idea, how many have taken the next step?

Clinical trials aren't a last resort. They're not reserved solely for

people who are sick, either.

More than 1000 clinical trials in Australia are recruiting right now — and many of those also require healthy, everyday Australians to take part.

Australia is a leader in clinical trials. Thousands occur each year, and we have some of the highest standards in place.

And surveys tell us that the vast majority of Australians support clinical trials as a research practice, too. In a 2012 survey, 86 per cent of the respondents agreed that clinical trials contribute to advances in healthcare.

The last step — and what we need to keep our research going — is for people to take their support of clinical trials as a concept, and convert it into action.

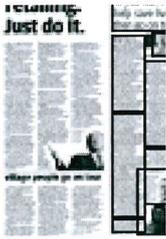
Given the abundance of trials taking place at any given time, almost anyone can get involved.

And that is why Jarryd's interview was so important.

We need people to understand what taking part in a clinical trial means, the importance and value of participating in a trial, and what it ultimately helps to achieve.

Without the support of people in the community, we can't continue to test our discoveries and improve the quality of our medicines and treatments.

We've all been affected by sickness and disease, and perhaps wondered how we could do something to help. There are no guarantees that the clinical trial that you take part in will save a life — but there's a chance, and one



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that's worth taking.

The cervical cancer vaccine took a lot of hard work, a lot of luck, and a lot of generous people.

The next breakthrough could be right around the corner. We just need your help to get there.

**For more about clinical trials, visit [www.australianclinicaltrials.gov.au](http://www.australianclinicaltrials.gov.au), or speak to your GP.**

**PROFESSOR IAN FRAZER, AC, CLINICIAN, SCIENTIST AND RESEARCHER, IS CO-INVENTOR OF THE HPV VACCINE, AND WAS AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR IN 2006**

