2022 CSANZ Research Scholarship Winners Rebecca Raeside and Thomas Meredith

Congratulations to Rebecca Raeside, PhD Candidate, Research Officer at the University of Sydney

Rebecca's Project : Health4Me Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT): primary prevention of cardiovascular disease among young people.

The Project Synopsis:
The current picture of young peoples' health in Australia is alarming with escalating health risks such as poor diet, physical inactivity, increased screen time and poor mental health becoming widely prevalent. These health risks can lead to chronic health problems such as heart disease in adulthood. Australia's 3.3 million teenagers have little support to manage these health risks and accessible, engaging programs that support a healthy lifestyle are urgently needed. My innovative Health4Me program will strive to solve this problem. We know that text message healthy lifestyle programs in adults have improved health outcomes and resulted in positive behaviour change. Over the next 3 years, I will lead a research project that will develop and test an engaging healthy lifestyle program for teenagers using text messages, a method through which they communicate every day. I will work with teenagers to co-create the Health4Me program using an established process. I will test how effective Health4Me is in a randomised clinical trial (330 teenagers) and evaluate if the program improves physical and mental health outcomes, whether it is acceptable and engaging and if the program can be embedded into the Australian healthcare system. If it helps, it can be scaled up to deliver to teenagers throughout Australia to improve health outcomes.

Congratulations to Dr Thomas Meredith,
Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, UNSW

Tom's Project : Improving therapeutic decision making in aortic valve stenosis

The Project Synopsis:
Aortic stenosis is the most common heart valve disease. It is characterised by a complex interplay between the aortic valve and the heart muscle (ventricular) function, making diagnosis and treatment timing challenging. Although replacement of the aortic valve has improved the prognosis of this condition, the current recommendations for the timing of replacement are associated with a highly advanced disease state and oftentimes sub-clinical heart muscle dysfunction, which is not only likely irreversible, but also portends a worse prognosis. It is possible that there may be a significant advantage to aortic valve intervention prior to the end-stage disease state which currently forms the basis for guideline recommendations. In the proposed doctoral research, we aim to better predict the response to therapy in aortic stenosis and identify factors associated with a favourable response to aortic valve intervention, such that we can help individualise treatment for patients and improve survival.